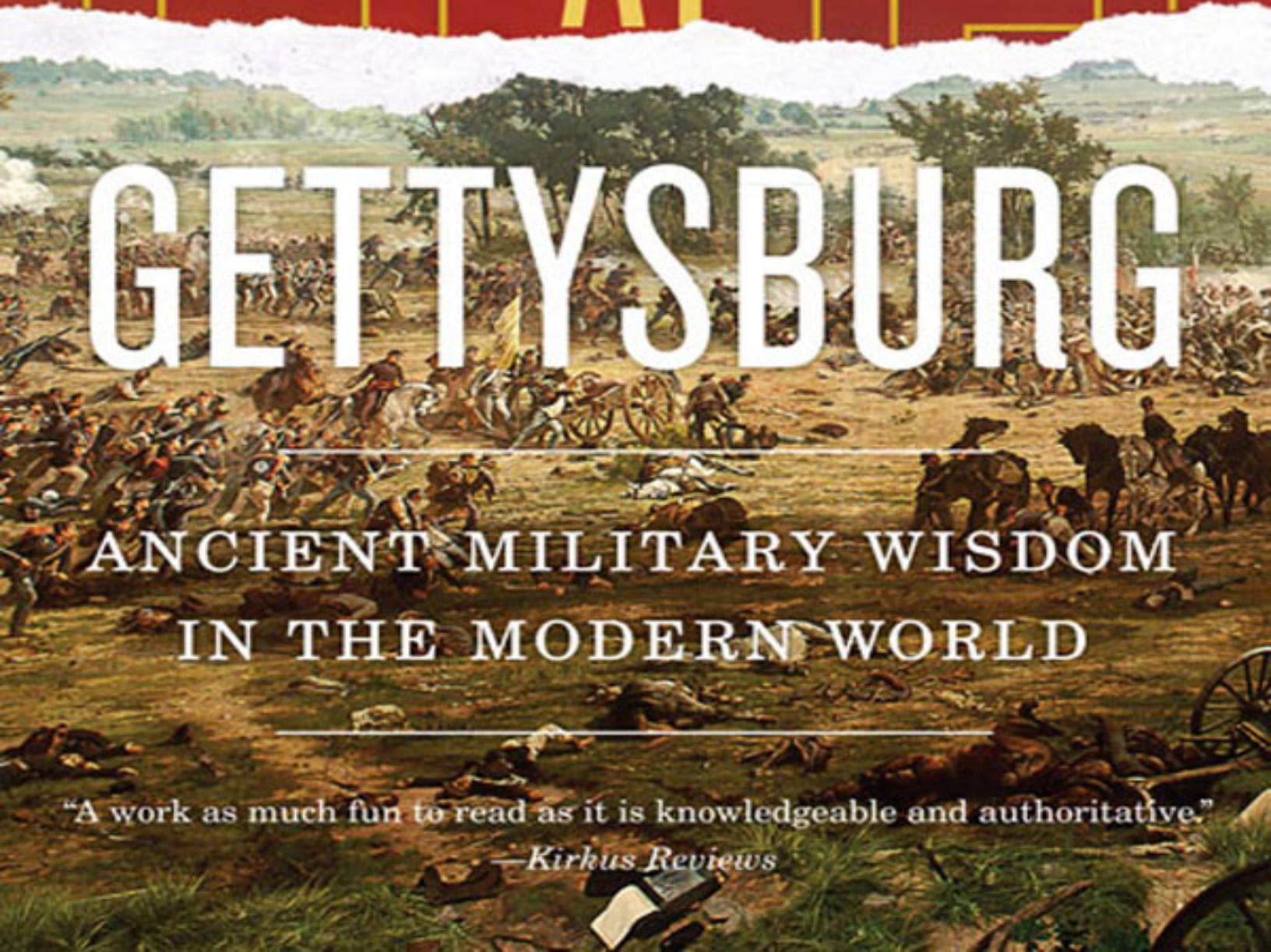
BEVIN ALEXANDER

SUN TZU AT GETTYSBURG



ANCIENT MILITARY WISDOM IN THE MODERN WORLD

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Ancient Military Wisdom in the Modern World

Bevin Alexander

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INTRODUCTION

To Avoid Strength, Strike Weakness

We have only one masterwork on the conduct of war. It was produced 2,400 years ago by a Chinese sage named Sun Tzu. His small book, *The Art of War*, spells out universal principles that describe the nature of war, and these principles are still valid today.[1] This current volume is designed to show that commanders who unwittingly used Sun Tzu's axioms in important campaigns over the past two centuries were successful, while commanders who did not apply them suffered defeat, sometimes disastrous, war-losing calamities.

Sun Tzu's principles can be applied to any military problem, from the smallest engagement to the largest campaign. Other leaders in other times discovered a number of these principles, but only Sun Tzu put together a comprehensive summary of the essential elements that make warfare succeed. It is this unique contribution to our understanding of armed conflict that led the renowned English strategist Basil H. Liddell Hart to call Sun Tzu's book "the concentrated essence of wisdom on the conduct of war."[2]

Sun Tzu's book has influenced Oriental warfare profoundly for over two thousand years, but it became widely known in the West only in the 1970s. This occurred primarily because both France and the United States encountered guerrilla forces in Vietnam who used Sun Tzu's axioms to

defeat their armies. Although the Vietnamese Communists possessed only minuscule military power, they nullified the vastly greater strength of the French and the Americans and drove them out of the country.

Until *The Art of War* became generally recognized in the West, military leaders had to rely on statements and conclusions reached by individual thinkers over the eons. Although some arrived independently at a few of the axioms articulated by Sun Tzu, none produced an all-inclusive theory of warfare. For example, the Bible (2 Samuel 5:23–25) contains an injunction to strike indirect blows against the enemy, but this axiom is buried in a vast narrative of inchoate warfare between the Jews and Philistines. Homer tells a marvelous tale of how the beauty of Helen, the abducted wife of Menelaus, launched a thousand ships against Troy, but he offers very little about how the Trojan War was fought. Herodotus and Thucydides describe fascinating histories of the ancient Greeks but give almost no details about how they won and lost their wars. Xenophon's march of the ten thousand Greeks to the sea is one of the great adventure stories of all time. Though he provides tantalizing hints of how the Greeks surmounted obstacles, like getting through enemy-infested mountains, he provides little information on the theories the Greeks employed to conduct war.

From narratives written long after they died, we can put together a few ideas about how Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire and how Hannibal forced Rome to "tremble in her gates." But neither great captain left any account of his theory of war. Three Byzantine treatises, Emperor Maurice's Strategikon of 578, Emperor Leo the Wise's Tactica of 900, and Nicephorus Phocas's discourse of 980, gave practical instructions on warfare that allowed the Eastern Roman Empire to endure for hundreds of years. Between the time of these ancient warriors and the present, there have been few enough pronouncements by military leaders, and no overall theory of warfare. Robert the Bruce (1274–1329) left a "testament" urging the Scots to avoid stand-up war with the English and keep their independence by guerrilla-like war in hills and morasses. The French general Pierre-Joseph de Bourcet (1700–1780) proposed a "plan with branches," of dividing an army into several columns and marching them on separate targets—forcing the enemy to divide his strength and allowing concentration on one or more ill-defended objectives. Napoléon Bonaparte

(1769–1821) produced no summary of his axioms, but his campaigns reveal that he relied on the offensive, pursued a defeated enemy, trusted on speed to gain time, and concentrated superior strength on the battlefield. The Prussian Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) made the important point that war is only a continuation of national policy, not an end in itself. But his emphasis on total war and bloodshed undermined his theory. If war is a continuation of policy, the goal is the primary purpose. In emphasizing victory, however, Clausewitz looked only to the end of the war, not the subsequent peace. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson (1824–1863) said, "Always mislead, mystify, and surprise the enemy. . . . Never fight against heavy odds."

These examples show that, though military leaders throughout history have occasionally produced incisive thoughts about warfare, none except Sun Tzu has demonstrated an extensive understanding of war in all of its aspects. Accordingly, Sun Tzu provides us the only comprehensive, coherent guide to the way war should be conducted. We can also follow his advice to solve specific problems before we have advanced irretrievably into harm's way, such as assuring that our soldiers can be properly fed, ascertaining the size and nature of the enemy we are about to face, and learning essential facts about the terrain into which we are going to advance.

This book examines a number of decisive operations in the modern age—beginning with the battles of Saratoga in 1777 and Yorktown in 1781 that guaranteed American independence, then the pivotal battles of Waterloo in 1815 and Gettysburg in 1863, and going forward to the Korean War in 1950, when we walked blindly into a terrible, costly, unnecessary conflict with Red China. It shows how these campaigns were actually carried out, and whether the commanders followed the universal principles of *The Art of War*.

Sun Tzu's axioms can be employed in any military context in any war. His most profound principle is that "the way to avoid what is strong is to strike what is weak." He writes this same principle in a different way: as water seeks the easiest path to the sea, so armies should avoid obstacles and

seek avenues of least resistance. The general should find a way to achieve his goals indirectly, not by direct confrontation.

A related Sun Tzu admonition is to “strike into vacuities,” that is, to move into undefended space, and to “attack objectives the enemy must rescue.” One should move around the enemy to cut him off from retreat or succor, or to attack some point that he cannot afford to lose. This point might be a railway line that brings supplies, an important city, or a road or a mountain that bars the enemy’s line of retreat.

Napoléon Bonaparte understood the requirement for indirection quite well. In most cases, he sought to push his decisive force onto one wing or into one flank of the enemy, seeking to envelop him, drive him from his base, and in this way destroy him. This was how he opened the 1805 campaign, by swinging far to the north, then descending on the rear of the Austrian army along the Danube River. But he inexplicably failed to use this same axiom at Waterloo in 1815, and this led to his defeat. The indirect approach of isolating an enemy or forcing him to scramble to protect some vital point is in contrast to the direct assaults and headlong clashes between opposing armies that have characterized most wars and most generals throughout history.

Sun Tzu’s maxims are disarming because, once pointed out, they appear to be the obvious, most sensible thing to do. But all great ideas are simple. The trick is to see them and to act on them.

The West’s intense awareness of Sun Tzu came in the wake of a decision by the Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong to assist the ruling Nationalist Party in China in resisting the aggression of Japan, which finally resulted in open war in 1937. In that year Mao published a small book entitled *Guerrilla Warfare* that was widely distributed in China at ten cents a copy. Mao’s book embodied the experience of his guerrilla struggle against the Nationalists, which began in 1927 and came to a temporary halt and a united front with the Nationalists after the “long march” of a few thousand Communists from Jiangxi province in southeastern China to Yan’an in Shaanxi province in north China in 1934–1935. Mao was quick to acknowledge that Sun Tzu gave him practically all the ideas he incorporated into his methods.

Mao’s book showed how the Japanese could be stymied by a similar guerrilla war. Such a war did not develop, however. The Nationalist leader

Chiang Kai-shek realized that the Communists were much more skilled in this kind of combat than the Nationalists, and any successes would be credited to them. This would undermine the Nationalists and lead to Chiang's ouster. Chiang refused to institute a guerrilla campaign. When the United States came into the war in December 1941, he saw that all he had to do was wait, and the United States would win the war for him.

Mao's book thus failed in its original intent. But it was the first systematic analysis of guerrilla warfare ever written, and it became the basic textbook for waging revolutionary and anticolonial struggles throughout the globe after the end of World War II. Its application was especially evident in the Communist insurgency against the French and later the Americans in Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh and his principal general, Vo Nyugen Giap. By using Mao's methods, the Communists hobbled both nations' modern armies. Vietnam was overwhelming proof that the principles of Sun Tzu put forward in Mao's book were valid.

The primary aim of Mao's system was to direct small groups of soldiers to make modest but frequent attacks against enemy towns, bases, depots, and lines of supply and communication, and then to disappear quickly like "fishes" into the "water" of the surrounding population. The goal was to obligate the enemy to disperse his forces widely to protect his vital points. Even guarded, these positions remained vulnerable, because the enemy could not predict which position Mao's forces would attack next. The effect was to render the enemy insecure and passive, and therefore demoralize him and nullify his strength.

Mao's indebtedness to Sun Tzu was recognized by Samuel B. Griffith, a Marine Corps captain who translated Mao's work into English in 1940. This original translation received little attention, but in 1961 Griffith, a retired brigadier general at the time, reissued the volume with a comprehensive introduction. Two years later he published a highly praised translation of *The Art of War*.[3] These books set in motion a host of new translations of and commentaries on Sun Tzu's work.

Although Sun Tzu is justifiably famous for teaching us how to conduct war, his most important admonition is to urge people to avoid war. "Warfare is the greatest affair of state," he writes, "the basis of life and death, the way to survival or extinction." If wars are unavoidable, he urges

nations to conduct swift campaigns and to undertake short conflicts with as little damage as possible. In all history, he emphasizes, “there is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.”

ONE

Saratoga, 1777: The Battle That Transformed the World

By 1775, much had changed in America and in Britain since the first English settlers landed at Jamestown in Virginia in 1607 and at Plymouth in Massachusetts in 1620. These little perch sites on the edge of an unknown continent had grown into thirteen highly prosperous, highly assertive colonies boasting two and a half million people, one-third the population of Great Britain. Britain itself had grown immensely. In 1707 Scotland had joined England in the United Kingdom. In the Seven Years' War of 1756–1763 it had ousted France from Canada and largely from India and had become the earth's major imperial power. Driven by the invention of an efficient steam engine in 1769 and by tools that mechanized cloth making and iron production, Britain was entering the Industrial Revolution and had become the leading manufacturing country in the world.

In 1775, therefore, neither the tremendously successful British establishment nor the comparably successful colonies were willing to compromise on a fundamental difference between them: who had the right to rule? Parliament had gained supremacy in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and claimed the authority to decide all matters, including taxation. The colonies elected no members of Parliament and asserted that taxation without representation was tyranny. British leaders answered that Britain had created the colonies, and therefore the colonists had no claim to

parliamentary seats. The colonists disputed this in principle, but, far more important, they were moving away from any sense of being Britons at all.

As the historian Frederick Jackson Turner wrote, with every step of the colonists away from the coast, they became increasingly aware of the limitless frontier before them, and they became less and less European and "more and more American."[1] A sense of democracy and equality spread from the earliest days of the colonies. The idea of liberty and freedom long predated Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence.

The essential thrust of the American experience, therefore, was toward a separate American existence. The only chance Britain had to stop this movement was by offering the Americans complete and total equality. The great Scottish philosopher Adam Smith proposed just such a course in his classic work, *The Wealth of Nations*.[2] But even this might not have been enough, and Britain's leaders were unwilling to make any real concessions. They were drawn almost entirely from the aristocratic class, and they saw any grant of rights to the Americans as a loss of privilege and wealth to themselves.

Consequently, British leaders responded with force to the armed resistance of the colonists at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill in Massachusetts in 1775. They rejected any compromise. The result was revolt and, on July 4, 1776, the proclamation of independence in Philadelphia.

The British leaders should not have resorted to war until they had exhausted all other possibilities, or until they had come up with a practical plan to gain victory. That is the first and most fundamental axiom of Sun Tzu.[3] They did neither.

Most astonishingly, British leaders largely disregarded their most powerful weapon, the Royal Navy. They might have won the war with few casualties if they had occupied or blockaded all the major American ports and protected their conquests with the Royal Navy. The Americans depended on exports, mostly agricultural or forest based, and on imports of manufactured goods. Closing the ports might in time have led to a compromise. Such a policy would have been consistent with a fundamental Sun Tzu axiom: that one should advance into the enemy's vacuities, that is, into undefended or indefensible places.[4] The Americans could not have

kept any of their ports open against British sea power, as was demonstrated by the ease with which the British seized and held on to New York.[5]

A blockade strategy would have nullified the colonies' great strength —their vast extent. It would also have nullified the Americans' ability to wear down the British army by attrition. There would have been no need for land campaigns. British soldiers would have been required to fortify and garrison some but not all of the major ports. Behind such prepared fortifications, backed by Royal Navy guns, the British would have been invincible.[6]

This was precisely the strategy General Winfield Scott advocated in 1861 to end the American Civil War. Scott told President Abraham Lincoln the North should capture New Orleans, seal up the other Southern ports, and form a large army along with armored gunboats to move down the Mississippi River and cut off the western Southern states. Newspapers named it the "Anaconda Plan," since it called for strangling the South the way an anaconda snake strangles its victims. Scott then wanted to do nothing more, simply hold on. With its ports closed and communication with the rest of the world cut off, the rebellion, Scott said, would die for lack of resources. But Lincoln rejected this plan. He wanted to crush the rebels by military force. Even so, Lincoln adopted a sea blockade and seizure of the Mississippi, devoting a substantial part of the North's resources to these purposes.

The American expert on sea power, Alfred Thayer Mahan, specifically notes the similarity of the Anaconda Plan to Britain's opportunity to seal off the colonies.[7]

The British also could have used the Royal Navy to isolate the colonies and to subdue them one region at a time. Mahan writes that the colonies were so intersected with estuaries, lakes, and navigable rivers that they "were practically reduced to the condition of islands, so far as mutual support went." Chesapeake Bay and the rivers feeding it, for example, offered easy avenues by which boats and ships could penetrate deep into the interior of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania and cut off huge sections of the country. New England especially could have been sealed off from the other colonies by vessels on the Hudson River and on Lakes George and Champlain.[8]

Sun Tzu admonishes leaders to avoid all campaigns not based on detailed analysis of the options available.[9] The failure to exploit the Royal Navy is astounding, given the English resolve for more than a century prior to the American Revolution to dominate the oceans. It demonstrates that a nation must do more than produce the world's biggest fleet or the most powerful army. Far more important, it must find leaders who know how to use these instruments.

This did not happen. British leaders resolved to win, not by making brilliant strategic moves to close the ports or to isolate regions, but by beating down resistance by main force. Since the colonies extended for a thousand miles north and south and for an average of 150 miles inland, this strategy was extremely problematical, for the British could rule only the ground on which their soldiers stood. There was no possibility of creating an army large enough to dominate all colonial territory.

In the actual conduct of the war, the British leaders largely disregarded the terrain of North America and the experience gained from battles that had been fought in America in years past. They believed they could transfer European battle theories to America with little or no alteration. They brought to America the same highly disciplined mercenary forces that made up European armies. In Europe these armies were trained to withstand repeated musket volleys at short range. When one side became weakened and disorganized by this fire, the issue was generally settled by a bayonet charge directly at the vulnerable enemy force. This usually caused the attacked force to collapse in chaos.

Belief in the bayonet charge was an article of faith in the British army. British officers saw that Americans were unsuited to the extreme discipline that made it possible for mercenaries to endure musket volleys before cracking. Americans were notoriously ill disciplined and individualistic. When stand-up fights developed, Americans scattered as soon as the British launched a bayonet charge.

To the British, this was a fatal flaw, a guarantee that they could win any major collision. They disdained the usual American practice of remaining behind trees or stone fences and picking off British soldiers with their muskets or longer-ranged rifles. They thought little of American reliance on sharpshooters, hastily built field fortifications, surprise sweeps

on the enemy flanks and rear, and harassment of enemy vanguards and rear guards.

But the American system of fighting was far more effective than the European system. Unlike the generally open pastoral landscapes of Europe where there was little cover, the terrain in America was largely deep forest with only occasional stretches of cleared ground. There were many places to hide. Americans much preferred cover to the extremely costly European practice of standing in the open and exchanging fire with enemy soldiers also in the open.

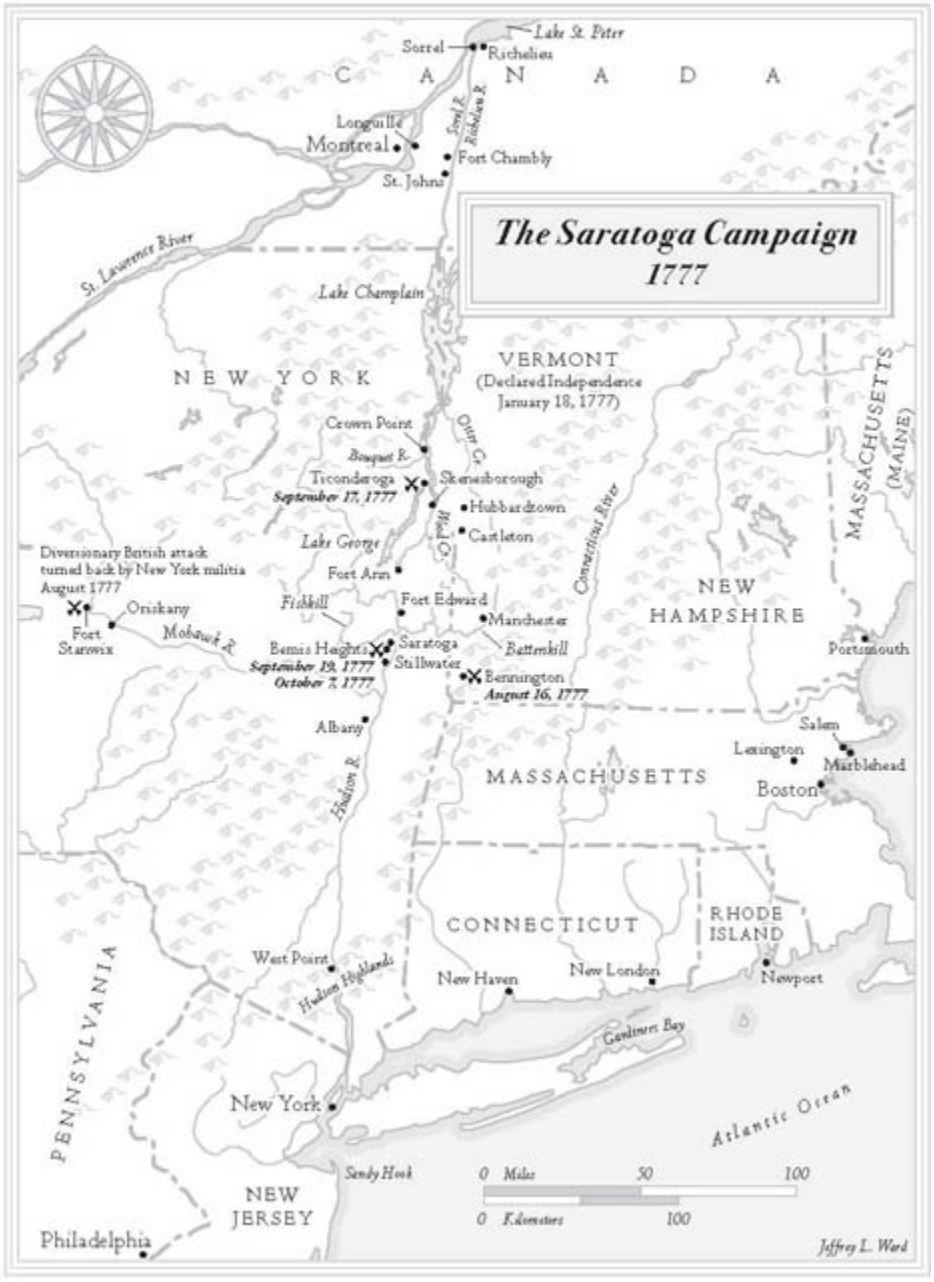
Americans had learned much in their collisions with the Indians on the frontier. Indians never attacked settlers head-on. They always tried to sneak up on their enemy, to ambush him, to cut off his retreat, to attack swiftly—and to get away just as swiftly. Americans had been deeply influenced by British General Edward Braddock's disastrous expedition to seize the French bastion of Fort Duquesne (present-day Pittsburgh) in western Pennsylvania in 1755. Indians had ambushed Braddock's force of 2,000 men in the tangled forests along the Monongahela River, killing or wounding 863, with Braddock himself dying.

Americans adapted naturally to this pattern of warfare, and this is how they fought the first engagements of the Revolution, at Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill. But British leaders refused to profit by the experience of General Braddock, and they refused to examine American methods objectively. Instead, they saw these methods as evidence of weakness. Confidence grew that a British army could overcome any confrontation by a bayonet charge. Once dispersed, so the theory went, the rebels were certain to return meekly to the rule of the mother country.[10]

This attitude violated a basic axiom of Sun Tzu: "One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes meet with defeat."[11] British officers knew themselves, but they did not know the American enemy. They never adapted to the American way of war, and their occasional battlefield successes never achieved a resolution of the conflict.

In the fall of 1776, General John Burgoyne returned to England after service in America with an imaginative new plan to end the rebellion. Burgoyne proposed that an army of around 8,000 British regulars and German mercenaries, plus Indians and a few Canadians, be assembled at Montreal and drive southward along Lakes Champlain and George and then along the Hudson River to Albany, New York. This was largely unsettled, near-frontier country. But Burgoyne thought the effort was worth the danger, because he called for an army under General Sir William Howe to move up the Hudson from New York City and meet him at Albany. Howe commanded a large force of British regulars and German mercenaries who had seized New York City in July–September 1776 and were using the port as the main British base in America.

Burgoyne's plan was to isolate New England, which then could be conquered at leisure. Burgoyne believed that the surrender of New England would so demoralize the colonies to the south that they would give up as well.[12]



Burgoyne’s plan would entail much greater risk than a navy campaign with the identical objective. This was because Burgoyne’s supply line would be vulnerable along most of its length. American militiamen could emerge from the wilderness and attack it at many places. Naval vessels, on the other hand, could carry most of their supplies on board, and they could replenish them as needed from other vessels.

Burgoyne’s plan violated one of the most important teachings of Sun Tzu: do not advance into territory where one can be attacked but where one

cannot attack the enemy.[13] The forested and largely unsettled terrain on Burgoyne's line of march was eminently suitable for ambushes. The longer his supply line extended, the greater was its vulnerability. If the Americans could cut this line, his soldiers would be isolated, unless General Howe was able to rescue them quickly. If not, Burgoyne would be forced to surrender.

Burgoyne and the rest of the British leadership should have been aware of precisely such a peril, drawn from fairly recent history. In 1708 the Swedish king, Charles XII, led his unsupported army to Poltava, far into southern Russia on a tributary to the Dnieper River. At Poltava, the Swedish army was unable to advance and unable to retreat, its supply line having been severed and the men left starving. There, in June 1709, Peter the Great's Russian army overwhelmed the Swedes, eliminated Sweden as a major power, and turned Russia into the strongest country in eastern Europe.[14]

Poltava should have warned the British not to undertake a similar unsupported expedition deep into the interior of frontier America. But the British disregarded the danger entirely.

In London, Burgoyne presented his idea to Lord George Germain, head of the colonial office, which directed the war. Germain had been cashiered from the army for cowardice in the Seven Years' War and was wholly unqualified to run the colonial office. But the prime minister, Lord North, and King George III disregarded his failures and kept him in office.

Germain soon demonstrated that he had no strategic sense whatsoever and virtually no idea of how to conduct a war. Germain snubbed Burgoyne and took no action on his proposal, but Burgoyne was able to get King George to read the plan. The king liked it and directed Germain to carry it out.

Germain waited until March 26, 1777, to inform Sir Guy Carlton, governor-general of Canada, of the plan's adoption, and gave few details. Howe received a copy of Germain's letter to Carlton but no instructions as to what was expected of him. Germain wrote Howe eight letters between March 3 and April 19, 1777, but he never once referred to the Burgoyne expedition or in what manner Howe was supposed to cooperate.[15] The entire British strategy depended on the union of the two armies at Albany, yet Germain did not spell this out to the commander of one of these armies.

Meanwhile, Howe was developing a completely contradictory plan. He wanted to capture the American capital, Philadelphia. He was convinced the rebellion would evaporate once the site of the Continental Congress was seized. Howe wrote Germain and Carlton to this effect on April 2, 1777. Yet Philadelphia was the main town of only one of the thirteen colonies. America, unlike France and Austria, was not a nation-state. Capture of Philadelphia would little affect the other colonies' administrative, political, and economic structures.

In the letter to Carlton, Howe said he would probably be in Pennsylvania about the time Burgoyne's army approached Albany, and he would have too much on his hands to undertake a movement up the Hudson River. Howe's only hint of some possible help was a vague comment that there might be "a diversion occasionally upon Hudson's River."

Howe repeated in his letter to Germain his repudiation of Burgoyne's campaign. Now an almost inconceivable event occurred: Germain replied on May 18 approving Howe's scheme to capture Philadelphia, a task Howe explained that he intended to accomplish by advancing on the sea, not marching overland.

Demonstrating a complete ignorance of the huge expanse of America, Germain went on to say that whatever Howe elected to do, Germain assumed that "it will be executed in time for you to cooperate with the army ordered to proceed from Canada."[16] He should have known—or found out—that there was not the slightest possibility that Howe could sail from New York, capture Philadelphia, and still have time to rendezvous with Burgoyne.

Germain's plain duty was to veto Howe's plan and order him to assist Burgoyne. His failure to do this was the single greatest reason why Britain lost the American War of Independence. It was a monstrous failure of leadership, and it violated a basic axiom of Sun Tzu: nations should plan their campaigns with extreme care and then follow them with great fidelity. Failure to do this can result in disaster.[17]

Germain didn't send Carlton a copy of his letter to Howe. So Burgoyne did not realize the full extent of Germain's and Howe's irresponsibility—that they had compromised the whole campaign.

Burgoyne relied on Howe's ambiguous hint of a "diversion" on "Hudson's River." It was the slenderest of reeds on which to lean.

It is incomprehensible that Germain and Howe did not recognize the danger in which Burgoyne's army would be placed. Any reasonably qualified officer should have seen that Burgoyne—without the pressure of another British army coming on the rear of the Americans—would be isolated in a hostile, alien land.

Burgoyne commenced his march from Montreal on June 1, 1777. He went through rolling country to Lake Champlain. His army of 8,000 comprised about half British regulars and half German mercenaries. With him was a detachment of Canadians, and some hired Indian warriors. Hiring Indians aroused the intense antagonism of the Americans, because the Indians were known for drunkenness and extreme violence against men, women, and children.

At St. Johns (St.-Jean-sur-Richelieu)—where Lake Champlain flows into the Richelieu or Sorel River, which empties into the St. Lawrence River—the army boarded bateaus, flat-bottomed boats, each carrying thirty-five men, that were rowed southward up the lake.

The British proceeded to Crown Point. Ten miles to the south lay Fort Ticonderoga on the western side of the lake and just north of the falls that connect Lake George with Lake Champlain. Fort Ticonderoga (originally Fort Carillon), a star-shaped edifice 530 feet wide, had been built by the French in 1755–1758 out of local bluestone on the southern flank of a peninsula that jutted out into Lake Champlain.

Ticonderoga was held by 2,000 Americans under Major General Arthur St. Clair. Americans believed the fort was impregnable, but it was dilapidated and had been sited by the French facing south to block an advance by the British, not to defend against an attack from the north. In July 1776, an American engineer, John Trumball, decided that Rattlesnake Hill, just across the lake to the south, was a better defensive location because cannons mounted on its crest would have a clear field of fire down the lake to the north and could also cover the fort. The Americans renamed the hill Mount Independence and started fortifying it. Work was incomplete as the British approached, however. Nothing had been done about Sugar Loaf Hill (later called Mount Defiance), a steep elevation six hundred feet high, directly west of Mount Independence and just southwest of the fort.

Trumball concluded that guns on this hill could dominate both the fort and Mount Independence. He was ridiculed for his idea, and it remained unoccupied.

When Burgoyne came up on Fort Ticonderoga on July 1, 1777, he and his artillery commander, Major General William Phillips, saw at once that Sugar Loaf Hill was key to the position and ordered cannons atop it. On July 6, seeing British cannons about to bombard the fort, General St. Clair ordered an evacuation and retreated southward. The British occupied the fort without resistance.

The Americans withdrew hastily to Skenesborough, twenty-two miles south of Ticonderoga. They were quickly followed by Burgoyne. He now decided, rather than moving back and advancing along Lake George, to build a road from Skenesborough to Fort Edward, on the Hudson River twenty miles south. After great effort, the British arrived at Fort Edward on July 30.

Meanwhile a diversionary British effort had started at Oswego on Lake Ontario and advanced through western New York to seize Fort Stanwix (now Rome) on the eastward-flowing Mohawk River. Once the fort was captured, the aim was to proceed down the Mohawk to join Burgoyne at Albany, eliminating resistance along the way. This force, poorly led and depending on Indians, collided with militia units. The Indians were interested only in pillage and disappeared when they met determined settler resistance. The British regulars quickly retreated back into Canada, the whole operation having been a dismal failure.

Meanwhile, Burgoyne was at Fort Edward, trying to assemble sufficient food, draft animals, carts, and other supplies to move forward. On August 3, an officer-courier got through the American lines with a letter from General Howe. In it Howe dropped the bombshell: he was going to Pennsylvania, and offered no help to Burgoyne. Howe announced that Sir Henry Clinton would be left in command at New York and would “act as occurrences may direct.”[18] But it was clear that Clinton, having been left with few troops, was not about to take on the job that Howe had refused.

Here was the moment of truth for Burgoyne. He was left with two choices: retreat to Canada or attack a vastly larger army behind defensive

fortifications that the Americans were certain to set up. Sun Tzu has positive advice in such a situation: retreat. “The small army that acts inflexibly will become the captives of the large enemy,” he says.[19] Common sense also called on Burgoyne to withdraw and preserve the army to fight another day. He made the opposite decision.

Meanwhile Burgoyne’s shaky supply system was barely able to keep up with the army’s day-to-day needs, while most of his Indian allies deserted and took their loot back to their homes. Burgoyne had relied on the Indians as scouts to find out American dispositions. Now he was left blind in the heart of enemy country. Burgoyne abandoned Skenesborough and moved his supplies along Lake George, leaving small garrisons to guard the supply line back to Canada. His main strength was two regiments posted at Fort Ticonderoga.

To help solve the supply problem, Burgoyne sent a small foraging expedition to Bennington, Vermont, thirty-five miles southeast of Fort Edward. But that force, largely German, was virtually destroyed by Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts militiamen on August 16, 1777. The Americans boldly swarmed all around the Germans and sent them fleeing, costing Burgoyne almost a thousand men. The Germans were so hard-pressed they had no chance to mount a culminating bayonet charge.

The Bennington operation demonstrates how Burgoyne lacked any real strategic sense. He failed to heed a fundamental rule of war, which is also one of Sun Tzu’s primary axioms: keep one’s aims secret from the enemy. “Warfare,” Sun Tzu says, “is the way of deception.”[20] Burgoyne’s aims, on the contrary, were quite transparent. His direct path of movement pointed indisputably down the Hudson valley. Hence the American commander, Horatio Gates, was able to entrench directly in his line of march at Bemis Heights, a few miles south of the village of Saratoga on the western bank of the Hudson River and about twenty-five miles south of Fort Edward. Gates fortified these heights and waited on the British.[21]

If, on the other hand, Burgoyne had made a feint toward New England, he could have divided American forces and vastly increased the odds of overcoming a reduced force left at Bemis Heights. The Americans were fearful that Burgoyne’s aim was to conquer New England, and a deceptive move eastward would have doubled their concern. If Burgoyne’s

strike on Bennington had been mounted with half of his army, he would have gained needed supplies and also thoroughly deceived the Americans as to his strategic purpose. This would have drawn off many if not most of the Americans on a wild goose chase. Burgoyne then could have quickly concentrated his army and moved on Bemis Heights.

As it was, the Bennington victory vastly encouraged the Americans. They discovered that they could destroy a British force. Burgoyne now knew the Americans could sever his already tenuous supply line. Since he intended to advance, he had to secure food, wagons, and horses along the way. In this frontier country, there were few enough of these items to begin with, and the patriots tried to move as much as did exist out of British reach.

Meanwhile, on July 23, 1777, General Howe, with 18,000 British and German troops, set sail from New York in 170 topsail vessels and 60 smaller ships. American General George Washington, getting word that the fleet was seen off Sandy Hook, New Jersey, moving toward the open sea, reasoned that Howe was headed for Philadelphia. He left a garrison on the Highlands just north of New York City and set off across New Jersey with the rest of his army for Philadelphia.

Major General Clinton remained in New York with 3,000 British regulars, 1,000 German mercenaries, and 3,000 loyalist Americans.

On July 29, the British ships reached the Delaware Capes and entered the bay with the apparent intention of moving up the Delaware River to Philadelphia. But the ships reversed course, slipped out to sea, sailed through the Virginia Capes, and arrived on August 25 at Head of Elk (Elkton), Maryland, the northernmost port of Chesapeake Bay. The British army went ashore and commenced marching toward Philadelphia.

On September 11, Washington, with about 11,000 men, tried to stop Howe’s advance at Brandywine Creek, in Chester County, Pennsylvania, ten miles north of Wilmington, Delaware. But Howe skillfully turned Washington’s right, or western, flank, forcing Washington back on Philadelphia, with a loss of 1,000 Americans and 500 British.

On September 21, the British conducted a surprise attack at night using bayonets only and routed the brigade of General Anthony Wayne near Paoli Tavern at Malvern, a few miles west of Philadelphia. Howe occupied

Philadelphia on September 26, forcing the Continental Congress to flee to Lancaster and then to York, Pennsylvania.[22]

On October 4, Washington, now with 13,000 men, attempted a complicated movement against Howe's main encampment at Germantown, six miles northwest of Philadelphia. The effort failed, with the loss of 1,100 men.[23] This forced Washington to overwinter his army at Valley Forge under extremely harsh conditions, while the British enjoyed the shelter and comforts of nearby Philadelphia.

Meanwhile, on September 17, 1777, a 500-man American force under Colonel John Brown staged a surprise raid on Fort Ticonderoga, freeing 118 American captives, capturing 155 British soldiers and 119 Canadians, burning stores, driving off cattle and horses, and destroying most of the bateaus on Lakes Champlain and George. Brown and his men then boarded a small schooner and several gunboats and tried to eliminate a small British garrison on Diamond Island, a few miles north of the southern end of Lake George. But they were driven off by British gunboats. Brown's feat was a stunning reminder to Burgoyne that his supply line to Canada had vanished.

Even so, Burgoyne decided to advance. He concluded that despite the odds, the only chance of gaining success was to defeat the American army entrenched at Bemis Heights. On September 19, 1777, Burgoyne collided with this army. It was the biggest battle of the war, involving 9,000 men on the American side and 7,200 on the British side, with heavy fire from cannon and muskets, as well as highly effective patriot sharpshooters who concentrated on picking off British officers.

Fighting ended at nightfall with neither side having made headway or withdrawn. The battle had been a tumultuous melee of hand-to-hand fighting. There had never been the slightest chance for the British to launch their supposedly decisive charge with naked bayonets. Instead there had been a few chaotic short charges and countercharges by individual units on both sides, but nothing significant. The British were astonished at the staying power of the Americans. They lost 600 men, very heavy casualties for so small an army and twice as many as the Americans lost.

That same day, a courier from General Clinton got through to Burgoyne saying that Clinton was at last advancing up the Hudson with 2,000 men, all he could get together. Burgoyne was overjoyed and decided

to wait until Clinton arrived before attacking again. But Clinton's expedition was a will-o'-the-wisp. It was far too small, encountered heavy opposition while attempting to seize two forts along the Hudson in the Highlands, and became vulnerable to being surrounded itself. Clinton pulled back to New York.

Skirmishes resumed on Bemis Heights for a number of days. As more American reinforcements arrived nearly every day, the few remaining Indians and the Canadians sensed defeat and began to melt into the forests. Food for the British was running short. Many men got sick. By the first of October, Burgoyne had only 5,000 men fit for combat.

Burgoyne realized his last hope was a bold stroke that might break through the American barrier. In a council of war on October 6, he decided to attack. The effort, however, came too late. Not only were the Americans strongly entrenched, but they now numbered close to 20,000 men. On October 7, Burgoyne advanced, only to be driven back in a series of bitter engagements. Burgoyne withdrew northward, hoping to get away. On October 12, the Americans surrounded the army at Fishkill Creek, only a few miles north. Five days later Burgoyne surrendered.

The British had committed the same blunder that Charles XII had committed at Poltava in 1709. He was blocked from advancing or retreating in the heart of hostile country, with no help of rescue.

The effect of the victory was immediate. The American envoy in Paris, Benjamin Franklin, found the French—once they realized that the Americans might win after all—abandoning their previous indifference and discovering an intense interest in American welfare. In December, the French agreed to a treaty, signed in February 1778, recognizing the United States of America as independent. France actually declared war on June 1, 1778.[24] France wanted to avenge itself against Britain for its losses in the Seven Years' War. In addition, France persuaded Spain to join in an alliance, although Spain refused to recognize American independence and tried to stop any expansion of America west of the Appalachian Mountains.

TWO

The Carolinas, Yorktown, and Independence, 1781

The thrust of the colonies toward a separate existence outside the British Empire had been building for decades prior to the American Revolution. The colonists had long since developed patterns and attitudes at odds with those in Britain. Most especially, they believed they had the inherent right to own land, to move when and where they pleased, and to follow whatever trades or careers they wanted. They resented the tiny minority of aristocrats who ruled Britain and who exerted enormous pressure on the "lower classes" to keep them in "their proper stations."[1] They disdained the fact that the aristocrats owned nearly all the land and exacted huge rents from the "common people" to farm or to live in tenements in the towns.

A sense of equality, democracy, and opportunity had been present almost from the beginning in America. It was constantly reinforced by the realization that beyond the Appalachians, a boundless, bountiful land was waiting for everyone. No aristocracy, however selfish, could deprive them of it. No one had to be subservient to the rich and the privileged. The frontier broke all the bonds. Even those who had no intention of becoming pioneers shared in the freedom, because moving to the frontier was always an option.

Prior to the victory at Saratoga, many colonists had doubts about separation from the mother country. Some clung to residual loyalty. Others

could not conceive that a group of colonies with nothing approaching a "real army" could defy the might of Britain. But the victory and the French alliance changed everything. The prospect of success now seemed tangible. A new hope beckoned on the horizon. Americans saw the silhouette of a nation far greater in size, hope, aspirations, and opportunity than anything that existed in Europe.

Accordingly, all tendencies toward compromise and accommodation with Britain collapsed after Saratoga. The efforts that Britain made to make amends were greeted with scorn.

The British government itself was incapable of deep-seated change. What it now offered—everything short of independence—was too little and too late. Any possible chance for a settlement had died at Saratoga. A peace commission headed by the earl of Carlisle got nowhere when it arrived in Philadelphia.

Britain's narrow ruling class was unwilling to give up its claim to rule the colonies, or to offer the colonies equality with Britain, as Adam Smith had proposed in *The Wealth of Nations*. Instead, despite the evidence of Saratoga, they resolved to continue the same policy they had embarked on at the beginning: using British army regulars and hired German mercenaries to stamp out the rebellion with brute force. This policy had not worked so far. The disaster at Saratoga was evidence of its failure.

Leaders of countries and of armies are characteristically unwilling to admit that their plans have miscarried, and they are reluctant to turn to new strategies, especially if their political opponents or competitors proposed them. The inclination of all leaders and all commanders is to keep on adding more force to achieve the same goals when previous efforts have failed.

We have seen abundant cases of this predisposition since the Revolution. Here are two of many examples: In World War I, 1914–1918, leaders sacrificed millions of men for four years by continuing to launch hopeless charges against the machine guns, cannons, and field fortifications of the western front. In the Vietnam War, 1965–1972, American commanders continued to send troops on "search and destroy" missions against Vietnamese Communists, even though these missions nearly always failed and the Reds could withdraw safely into the forests or into the civilian population.

British leaders during the Revolution were especially inept. The government was composed of aristocrats who offered no ideas about how to pursue a war successfully. Lord George Germain, the man in charge of operations, was incompetent. General Sir William Howe, the senior commander in America, was an adequate orthodox soldier, but his insistence on going to Philadelphia instead of helping Burgoyne revealed his total lack of strategic sense. Howe's deputy, Sir Henry Clinton, who replaced Howe in early June 1778, was only marginally more capable than Howe, and he also lacked any vision for a different approach to the war. None of the admirals proposed using the Royal Navy to subdue the colonies. They were all deepwater sailors who focused on defeating enemy fleets on the open sea or seizing enemy merchant ships. It did not occur to any of them to institute a blockade of all the American ports or to divide and conquer by sending flotillas onto the estuaries, lakes, and rivers of the colonies. British leaders disregarded the American strategy, which was to exploit the vast extent of the colonies to absorb and ultimately to overcome the British armies. George Washington and his Continental army would always have great difficulty defeating British forces. But victory in battle was not necessary. The British could control only the ground on which their soldiers stood. Everything else was free.

The British made a fundamental blunder in not understanding and not trying to undermine the American strategy. "The highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy's plans," Sun Tzu says.[2] One should never ignore enemy strategy. Rather, one should study it to find a counterstrategy to defeat it.

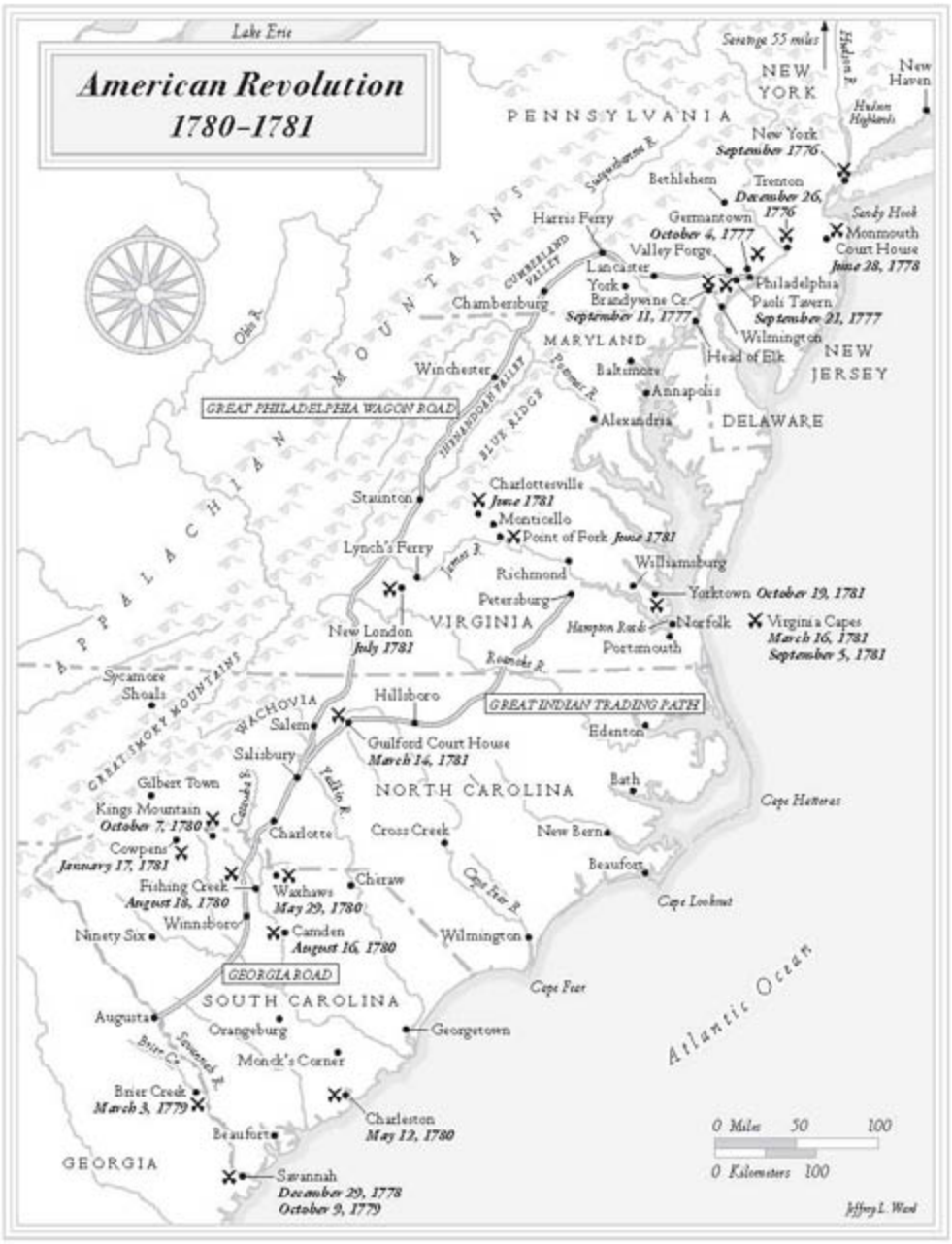
The semi-guerrilla warfare that the Americans developed from the outset remained the standard American method of conducting the war. Washington's direct challenges at Brandywine Creek and Germantown were contradictions of this method, and both failed. But the battle of Bennington, the raid on Fort Ticonderoga, and the deadly blocking action at Saratoga were examples of it, and they succeeded.

Since the occupation of Philadelphia by General Howe had produced no benefits whatsoever, Clinton ordered its evacuation and began moving the British army back to New York City by land.

During the severe winter of 1777–1778 at Valley Forge, General Washington had appointed a Prussian volunteer, Baron Friedrich Wilhelm Augustin von Steuben, to train the Continental army. Steuben had served on the staff of Frederick the Great, and he did much to reorganize and instill discipline in Washington’s ragged little force.

Washington, feeling that the Continental army now might meet the British on even terms, decided to challenge Clinton as he retreated across New Jersey. At Monmouth Court House (now Freehold Borough), Washington sent General Charles Lee with 5,000 men to attack Clinton’s rear guard on June 28, 1778. But Lee committed his forces piecemeal, and his efforts were disorganized. The rearguard commander, General Charles Cornwallis, 1st Marquess Cornwallis, ordered a counterattack, and Lee’s forces promptly disintegrated into chaos. Washington relieved Lee of his command. The engagement was a sobering reminder that the Americans still lacked good leadership and disciplined staying power against a determined British attack.

The British withdrew to Sandy Hook, where Royal Navy ships carried the army across the Lower Bay to the safety of Manhattan.



Monmouth was the last important battle in the northern theater. Lord Germain decided to transfer major operations southward. He conceived a new plan: first to conquer Georgia, then the Carolinas, and lastly Virginia, after which he felt the colonies to the north would feel isolated and would surrender.

General Clinton accordingly sent by sea 3,500 men under Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell to Savannah, Georgia. Campbell crushed a 1,000-man militia force and seized Savannah on December 29, 1778. Early

in 1779, General Augustine Prevost, in command of the British garrison at St. Augustine, Florida, marched north to Savannah with 3,000 men, while Campbell moved up the Savannah River valley and captured Augusta, Georgia.

An attempt to recapture Augusta failed March 3, 1779, when Campbell's force executed a perfect converging attack on the Americans, mostly militia, camped near the confluence of Brier Creek and the river halfway between Augusta and Savannah. While a decoy force pressed directly on the Americans, holding their attention, a turning force crossed Brier Creek upstream and descended on the American rear. When the surprised Americans mistakenly opened a gap in the center of their line, the British charged with fixed bayonets. The militia promptly broke and ran without firing a shot. A small group of Continental regulars held their position but were surrounded and forced to surrender. This was the kind of battle the British had expected to fight everywhere. It had not worked out often, but the results at Brier Creek vastly increased British hopes that the tide was turning.

In September 1779, French Admiral Comte Charles Henri d'Estaing arrived off Savannah from the West Indies with a squadron of warships and 4,000 French soldiers on transports. D'Estaing's forces besieged the town, joined by General Benjamin Lincoln from Charleston, South Carolina, with 1,300 Americans. Discouraged by the slow progress of the siege, anxious about the arrival of the hurricane season, and impatient after a long bombardment of the town did not induce Prevost to surrender, d'Estaing ordered a frontal assault on the British fortifications on October 9, 1779. The attack was a complete failure. The French and Americans lost 830 men; the British, 150. Refusing to continue the siege, d'Estaing sailed back to France. Lincoln returned to Charleston.

The failure to recapture Savannah and d'Estaing's abandonment of his allies caused American confidence in the French to drop sharply, seriously damaged morale, and greatly raised the hopes of General Clinton and the loyalists.

Seeing a golden opportunity to seize Charleston, Clinton left German General Wilhelm von Knyphausen in command in New York and set out on December 26, 1779, with ninety transports carrying 8,500 men and General

Cornwallis as second in command. The flotilla was escorted by fourteen warships under Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot.

General Lincoln's American force totaled 5,400 men; Clinton, with Prevost's troops, had more than twice as many. Instead of abandoning Charleston and keeping his army as a threat in the interior, Lincoln foolishly withdrew into the town on March 29, 1780. Clinton's cannons and Admiral Arbuthnot's guns began a severe bombardment that lasted until May 12, when Lincoln surrendered, the worst American disaster of the war.[3]

With the capture of Charleston and Savannah, the British reached a decisive fork in the road. In one direction lay a continuation of the policy that had failed them so far. In the other direction lay an opportunity for a radical change in strategy and possible victory.

British policy from the outset had been to march over the landscape with the intention of destroying all American forces in their path, frightening the patriots into surrender, and emboldening the loyalists to join the British army. This policy had not worked. The British had lost an army at Saratoga. They had undertaken a massive offensive to capture Philadelphia, winning all of their engagements against Washington and gaining precisely nothing. Even the defeat of the Americans at Monmouth Court House had resulted in no change in American defiance.

But the British seizure of Charleston and Savannah presented unmistakable evidence of success and demonstrated how a new strategy could be effective. The ports' capture largely closed off the commerce of South Carolina and Georgia. There were no other important ports south of Chesapeake Bay. North Carolina's coastline was mostly cloaked by the aptly named barrier islands. Only Wilmington was easily accessible to the sea. It was a small port, however, and of limited use to regions in the interior because of poor roads.

The proper decision of General Clinton, therefore, was to employ the Royal Navy to seize or to blockade the other major ports along the seaboard and thereby close down the foreign commerce of the colonies. The ports of Chesapeake Bay could be sealed by occupying Portsmouth and patrolling the Virginia Capes with a squadron. Likewise, Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware, could be shut down by stationing a squadron in the

upper Delaware Bay. Only Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boston would have to be occupied. Since the British already held Charleston, Savannah, and New York City, the colonies could be deprived of most of their trade with the capture of the two New England ports and the blockade of Chesapeake and Delaware bays.

Newport, Rhode Island, however, would need to be closed by a strong Royal Navy squadron, which could also slow traffic out of New London and other Connecticut ports. A French force of 5,000 troops, along with seven French ships of the line, the standard warships of the time, each with 74 guns, had occupied Newport in July 1780, and it became the headquarters of the French commander in America, Jean Baptiste de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau. If Newport were closed off, Rochambeau's naval squadron would be neutralized, and the main French fleet—if it appeared in North American waters—would have no safe harbor.

But none of this came about. General Clinton did not conclude that stopping South Carolina's and Georgia's overseas trade would force the people to come to terms. He did not see that the British needed to do no more than hold Charleston and Savannah. He did not see that the occupation or blockade of other ports would achieve the same results. The strategic opportunity was staring him in the face, but he did not see it. Inability to understand that indirect ways can often achieve goals when direct attacks fail is unfortunately quite common. As the nineteenth-century military historian Theodore Ayrault Dodge wrote, "The maxims of war are but a meaningless page to him who cannot apply them."[4]

Clinton did conclude, however, that the people of South Carolina were so depressed by the loss of their port and their only important city that resistance would collapse throughout the colony.[5] Clinton's assumption would have made sense in Europe, where wars were mainly dynastic clashes, the populace had little patriotic fervor, and the capture of a major provincial city usually settled matters. But this was not the case in America. A large portion of the populace was deeply committed to ousting the British, and an intense desire burst out all across the upcountry to resist the British and to liberate the city.

Clinton, assuming the battle had been won, continued the same British policy of marching armies through the country with the intention of

overawing the people. He left Lord Cornwallis in command with 8,500 men, told him to occupy the rest of the colony, and returned to New York in June 1780.

Cornwallis's own behavior and that of his men worsened the situation greatly. He dispatched 2,500 men into the backcountry to subdue the people and establish outposts. His men were high-handed, arrogant, and cruel. During the next three months Cornwallis's severe measures, especially the brutality of Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, aroused strong and effective guerrilla opposition, led by Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens. Francis Marion learned guerrilla warfare while fighting Cherokee Indians, and he applied his knowledge artfully to defeat isolated British parties and to harass their columns.[6] Americans were especially incensed by the massacre of a small force by Tarleton at Waxhaws (present-day Buford), near the North Carolina border, on May 29, 1780. Tarleton's cavalry charged a retreating force of Virginia Continentals under Abraham Buford. Just as the Virginians raised the white flag of surrender, Tarleton's horse was struck by a musket ball and fell. His men, thinking their commander had been shot, stabbed wounded Americans where they lay and gave no quarter to men who were surrendering. The killing frenzy soon stopped, but of the 350 Virginians, 260 were killed or wounded. The massacre aroused intense opposition throughout the backcountry of the Carolinas and Virginia. "Tarleton's quarter!" and "Remember Buford!" became rallying cries for the patriots.

The Continental Congress—without consulting Washington—appointed Horatio Gates, the hero of Saratoga, to replace Lincoln as the southern commander. Gates, an Englishman, had spent most of his life in the British army in North America. He came over to the American side as the first adjutant general and assisted George Washington in organizing American forces.

Gates re-formed the Continental army at Charlotte, North Carolina, in late July 1780 and advanced on the British outpost at the important crossroads of Camden, seventy miles southeast of Charlotte. He had about 3,700 men, 1,500 Continental regulars and the rest militia. Cornwallis came up with a force from Charleston, raising British strength to 2,100 men, 600 loyalist volunteers and the rest British regulars. He also had Tarleton's

legion of 250 cavalry and 200 mounted infantry, who were formidable in pursuing broken troops.

On August 16, 1780, Gates formed up his little army in the traditional European manner: his best troops, the Continentals and North Carolina militia, called the Tar Heels, on the right (the post of honor), and his raw and most inexperienced troops, the remaining militia, on the left. Cornwallis also lined up his troops in the traditional manner: his regulars on the right and his loyalists on the left. So the weakest American forces were facing the strongest British forces. As the battle opened, Cornwallis's regulars fired a volley into the militia and launched a charge with bayonets. The militia at once broke and fled, collapsing the entire left flank. The American Continentals and Tar Heels on the right attacked the British left, but the British regulars halted their pursuit of the militia, wheeled left, and launched another bayonet charge into the American flank. The Continentals and the North Carolinians held their ground and fought back fiercely. Cornwallis now ordered Tarleton's cavalry to charge the rear of the American line. This broke up Gates's army, and it disintegrated.

In one hour of combat, the Americans lost 2,000 men, half of them taken as prisoners. Tarleton pursued the survivors for twenty miles. General Gates, mounted on a swift horse, fled back to Charlotte.

Two days later Tarleton surprised the guerrilla leader Thomas Sumter at Fishing Creek, just north of Great Falls on the Catawba River, forty miles south of Charlotte. He killed 150 Americans and captured 200.

These two devastating blows seemed to prove to Cornwallis and the other British officers that they were correct in their theory that the Americans always broke and ran. They figured the war was as good as won. But things were not as they seemed. Tarleton's surprise at Fishing Creek was a chance event, while Gates's attack at Camden had been a foolish attempt to copy the battle tactics of Europe when he didn't have the army to carry them out.

Cornwallis now figured that he had a clear path to Virginia. In September 1780, he reached Charlotte with his main army and ordered Major Patrick Ferguson, commanding a force of loyalist volunteers, to guard his western flank. Ferguson moved to Gilbert Town in Rutherford County, North Carolina, at the edge of the high mountains about a hundred miles west of Charlotte. There Ferguson sent a paroled rebel deep into the

Great Smoky Mountains with the warning that if the rebels did not stop resisting British arms, he would march over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay the country waste with fire and sword.[7]

This was not the sort of threat likely to frighten the Scotch-Irish settlers, who made up the overwhelming majority of the people in Piedmont and western North Carolina. They were descended from Scottish Presbyterians who, after the English had driven the Irish out of Ulster in the seventeenth century, had created a thriving country based on sheep and woolen and linen cloth manufacture. But as soon as they became successful, the English Parliament prohibited export of their cloth and ousted their Presbyterian pastors, while the English landlords began charging rents far higher than the land could support. The Scotch-Irish left northern Ireland in a great wave of emigration to America beginning in the 1690s and accelerating after 1717. They carried with them a powerful anger against England, as well as their traditional Scottish love of freedom.

Ferguson's message stirred both emotions. Irate Scotch-Irish men gathered their horses, guns, and provisions together, assembled at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River (present-day Elizabethton, in eastern Tennessee), formed themselves into companies, and set out for Gilbert Town, picking up other volunteers along the way. When they arrived, Ferguson was gone. They elected their youngest leader, William Campbell, as their commander and started out in search of Ferguson.

At Cowpens (a short distance over the North Carolina line, and a few miles northwest of present-day Gaffney, South Carolina), they were joined by 400 upcountry South Carolinians, also Scotch-Irish, on October 6.

A spy reported that Ferguson was encamped on top of Kings Mountain, an isolated elevation about thirty miles to the east. The settlers wanted to capture Ferguson before he could reach Charlotte and gain protection from Cornwallis. They selected 900 of their best men and horses, who set off and arrived at Kings Mountain on the afternoon of October 7, 1780.

Ferguson had pulled up on the mountain because he felt no enemy could approach without showing himself. The patriots decided to surround the mountain and, using continuous fire, to close in on the top.

The patriots divided into four columns and moved against the loyalists from all sides. Because of their exposed position, Ferguson's men were being picked off by sharpshooters, while their own aim was poor because they were shooting downhill.[8] The patriots gained a foothold on the summit and closed in on the loyalists. Ferguson tried to cut through on a horse but was riddled with bullets. The second in command raised the white flag, but it took a while for the patriots to stop firing—they remembered Tarleton's massacre of the Americans at Waxhaws.

Not a single one of Ferguson's men escaped. Reports showed that 225 loyalists were killed, 163 wounded, and 716 captured, against a loss of 28 patriots killed and 68 wounded.

News of the victory set the countryside ablaze and brought out the militias of North Carolina and Virginia. Cornwallis found himself surrounded by a hostile population (he called Charlotte "a hornet's nest," a name Charlotteans have borne proudly to this day). He abandoned Charlotte and moved ninety miles south to Winnsboro.

Nathanael Greene, the new American commander who replaced Gates, meanwhile split up the small Continental army into guerrilla bands, and Cornwallis followed suit. Cornwallis learned that Daniel Morgan was operating west of Kings Mountain. He detailed Banastre Tarleton with 1,100 men to chase him down and destroy him. Morgan assembled his 1,900 men at the largely open grazing area of Cowpens. His force included Continental regulars and militia from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia.

Morgan, an experienced soldier who had won fame at Saratoga, placed his best troops—Continental regulars and some seasoned militia from Georgia and Virginia—on a hill in the center of the position. The British would be approaching from another hill to the southeast. Morgan drew up two lines in the low ground between the two hills, the first of skirmisher sharpshooters and the second of militia. The sharpshooters and militia would be firing uphill at the British, who would be silhouetted against the morning sunlight and provide easy targets. Morgan told the sharpshooters to delay the advance and then retire, and the militia to fire just two shots and then retreat to the rear. The withdrawal of the sharpshooters and militia would mask the third line. When Tarleton's men reached this line, they would be tired, disorganized, and attacking uphill.

When Tarleton arrived on January 17, 1781, he sent his infantry forward directly on the Americans, leaving 200 cavalry in reserve.

After shooting down fifteen British dragoons, the skirmishers retreated. The British hesitated, but advanced again, this time reaching the militiamen. As ordered, they poured two volleys into the British, who suffered heavy casualties and halted in confusion. The British re-formed, however, and moved forward again. The Americans seemingly broke in confusion and fled to the rear. Tarleton took this withdrawal as a full-blown collapse and advanced headlong into Morgan's final line on the hill. Here the attacking British met the solid fire of Morgan's best troops and recoiled in shock. Just then, Morgan's small cavalry force struck one flank, while the militiamen, who had re-formed in the rear, came back and struck the other flank.

The British force had been stopped in front and enveloped on two sides. Half of the British soldiers fell to the ground in dismay. Tarleton collided with some American cavalrymen but was able to flee from the field. The British lost 772 men, 120 killed and 652 captured, some of them wounded. Patriot losses were about 150. Morgan had fought a masterly battle, soundly defeating the most hated officer in the British army.

The victories of Kings Mountain and Cowpens changed the entire character of the war in the Carolinas. Cornwallis saw no possibility of subduing either colony. He then made a most strange decision: he resolved to continue to pursue the patriots in hopes of defeating them. He was unable to catch Greene, however, as he marched northward through Piedmont North Carolina to Hillsboro (between present-day Burlington and Durham). On March 15, 1781, Greene at last tried to challenge Cornwallis at Guilford Court House (just northwest of present-day Greensboro), but Greene's militiamen panicked and bolted from the field.

Though Cornwallis won this battle, he lost the campaign. His losses were so great and his supplies so scant that he decided to abandon the interior of the Carolinas and march to Wilmington on the coast, 200 miles southeast of Guilford Court House. There he was resupplied by sea. Other than a temporary occupation of Wilmington, the only places still held by the British south of Virginia were Charleston and Savannah.[9] The idea that the

British could eliminate resistance by marching through the colonies had been proved false.

In a bizarre way, the British were conducting a war that closely resembled the methods the U.S. Army used in Vietnam in 1965–1972. The British divided up their forces and attempted wide-ranging "search-and-destroy missions" that played directly into the hands of the Americans, as similar methods played directly into the hands of the Vietnamese Communists. This pattern characterized the campaign in the Carolinas from mid-1780 to early 1781. It was marked by the superb guerrilla operations of Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens, and by the modest but telling battlefield victories at Kings Mountain and Cowpens, which demonstrated what could happen to British forces if they were isolated.

But the guerrillas were also able to strike swift blows at the edges of the main British army. If pressed, they could withdraw into swamps and forests, where British pursuers could seldom find them. The indirect warfare of the guerrilla leaders put the British on the defensive, led to casualties, and denied them successful results. As soon as the British moved on, they lost control of the country they had occupied. There were no permanent conquests. Every gain was ephemeral.

British officers not only failed to see that their European tactics were never going to work in America, but also fell into the trap of trying to run down the scattered American forces and defeat them. In the Carolinas and later in Virginia, they chased the Americans over an area of 60,000 square miles (an area larger than England and Wales together) and never did more than kill or capture a few of them, while suffering staggering losses themselves.

No guerrilla war conducted by determined leaders and supported by a substantial portion of the population can be defeated. This was how the Scots preserved their freedom against England for centuries—by following the "testament" of Robert the Bruce to avoid pitched battles and fight only among hills and morasses. Although the Scottish wars had occurred a long time previously, they were part and parcel of the British military experience and should have been known to senior officers. Far more recent and far more representative of what the British faced in the Carolinas was General

Edward Braddock's expedition to Fort Duquesne in 1755, when Braddock lost his life and half of his army to an Indian ambush.

Once it became clear that British methods were not working in America—and they had plainly failed by the time of Cowpens on January 17, 1781—then another method was necessary. A far better policy would have been to attack the enemy's strategy, one of Sun Tzu's tenets. The British still could have abandoned a land war entirely and blockaded the American ports. But such an epiphany did not occur.

Instead, Lord Cornwallis proposed to Lord Germain on April 18, 1781, that major operations be transferred to Chesapeake Bay, hoping that a successful operation there would induce the Carolinas to surrender. He was opposed by Clinton, but he got solid backing from Germain and King George.[10]

Cornwallis and Germain came to this conclusion not only because of the disappointing results of the Carolinas campaign but also because the British had little scope for operations out of New York City, their principal bastion. George Washington's troops blockaded the port on the land side. It is strange that it took the British until 1781 to realize that the magnificent harbors of Hampton Roads in the Chesapeake Bay offered their best chance —next to a blockade of American ports—of stamping out the rebellion. Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in North America and is fed by most of the rivers of eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.

If a strong Royal Navy flotilla occupied the bay and set up a naval and supply base at one of the Hampton Roads harbors, then patrolled the Virginia Capes, the British could guarantee their supply line back to Britain. And the rivers could be used as highways to penetrate deep into the interior. Large regions could be isolated and conquered, and the navy could play as large a role as the army. But this was not the thinking of Thomas Graves, the admiral who had replaced Marriot Arbuthnot in command of the British squadron at New York. Graves had no interest in operations in bays and rivers.

On the other hand, Cornwallis wanted to evacuate New York, bring the British army and the Royal Navy squadron to the Chesapeake, and begin conquering Virginia and the other middle colonies. Clinton opposed abandoning New York, and Germain hovered between the two, unable to

accept so resolute a plan as Cornwallis's but hoping vaguely to combine the efforts in New York and Hampton Roads.[11]

But combining the two was strategically impossible. British land forces would be separated by hundreds of miles of patriot-held territory. Most critically the limited naval forces had to be either divided between the two locations, leaving both unable to contest a major French challenge, or concentrated at one point, leaving the other unprotected. The choice was clear.[12]

This is why Sun Tzu and all great strategists call for concentrating forces at a single crucial location—because a decision can be made there.[13] Napoléon Bonaparte stated the principle quite succinctly: "It is the same with strategy as with the siege of a fortress: concentrate your fire against a single point, and once the wall is breached, all of the rest becomes worthless and the fortress is captured."[14] Dividing one's aims between two locations halves the forces at both places. There was little chance for a decisive victory at New York, but there was a strong chance for victory in the Chesapeake. Victory there would permit recovery of New York later.

But Germain, Clinton, and Graves were unable to make the choice. They adopted a policy of offense from the Chesapeake but kept the main army and the fleet based at New York, hoping that the ships could rush down to the Virginia Capes if a French fleet threatened. By failing to concentrate their power at the single critical point where the issue had to be decided, the British leaders set up the conditions for disaster.

Concentration was vital because Britain's ships were limited in number on the North Atlantic coast. The Royal Navy, though bigger than any other country's fleet, was inadequate at all times to secure North America and the Atlantic sea lanes, while also protecting Britain against invasion and preventing the French from recovering the lands it lost in the Seven Years' War.[15]

Britain thus adopted in the Chesapeake exactly the policy it had adopted in Burgoyne's 1777 campaign down from Canada: Cornwallis was burdened with a huge task but was given few means—most notably no naval protection—to carry it out. He would be just as isolated as Burgoyne if his sea connection was broken, even for a short time, since all of his

supplies and reinforcements had to come by water from New York or England.

At the first of the year 1781, Clinton sent the traitor Benedict Arnold with 1,600 men to the Chesapeake port of Portsmouth. Arnold's treason had occurred on September 21, 1780, when the Americans discovered his plot to transfer to the British the bastion of West Point, a key strategic position on the Hudson River north of New York City. Arnold had been one of George Washington's favorite commanders. He was brave, tenacious, and gifted as a military leader. But he was also egotistical and self-interested. When he did not get the promotions he expected, Arnold hardened his heart against the American cause and offered his services to the British—at a price. In secret correspondence with General Clinton, Arnold promised to deliver West Point, which he commanded, along with the 3,000 American defenders, to the British for £20,000 sterling (about $1 million today). When the plot was aborted, Clinton still gave Arnold £6,000 sterling and appointed him a brigadier general in the British army.

Arnold served George III with the same skill and daring he had shown in the patriot cause. He devastated Richmond, Virginia, forcing the governor, Thomas Jefferson, to flee. He then raided supply depots and torched plantations, villages, and iron foundries before moving back to Portsmouth. In May, hobbled by gout, Arnold returned to New York. Later in Connecticut, he burned ships, warehouses, and much of the town of New London, a major port for patriot privateers. After the war, Arnold was treated with coldness and contempt in Britain. He died as he lived, a man without a country.

To protect Virginia as best he could, Washington sent a French volunteer, Marie-Joseph du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, to command patriot forces in Virginia. He had about 3,500 men. Cornwallis meanwhile moved up from Wilmington and took command of a small British expeditionary force at Petersburg, Virginia, on May 20, 1781. Counting the garrison at Portsmouth, Cornwallis had 8,000 men.

Cornwallis tried without success to bring Lafayette to battle. He destroyed all the stores he could find around Richmond and then moved to Williamsburg to find a base for his army. He soon decided on Yorktown,

close to Williamsburg, a few miles upstream from Hampton Roads on the York River.

Meanwhile Cornwallis's cavalry launched raids deep into the Virginia interior. In June 1781, Tarleton struck Charlottesville, where he nearly caught Jefferson, while Lieutenant Colonel John Simcoe seized the Continental army's weapons and ammunition depot at Point of Fork, junction of the Rivanna and James rivers, about fifty miles west of Richmond. In July 1781, Tarleton raided as far as New London in Bedford County, 120 miles west of Richmond.

Neither Clinton nor Germain made any effort to reinforce Cornwallis or to recognize that he might be in peril if a French squadron closed off the Virginia Capes for any length of time. Clinton and Germain were extremely slow in realizing that access to the Chesapeake was mandatory to protect Cornwallis. Yet they had received fair warning. On March 8, 1781, a squadron of eight French ships under Charles Sochet Destouches tried to seize control of the Chesapeake and land a French troop detachment to reinforce Lafayette. British lookouts spotted Destouches's ships soon after they departed Newport, Rhode Island. Eight British ships at Gardiners Bay on the eastern end of Long Island, went in pursuit. The two squadrons collided just outside the Virginia Capes on March 16. Although the British suffered more damage than the French, Destouches abandoned his attempt and returned to Newport.

Only six days later, on March 22, 1781, a fleet of twenty-six French ships of the line and a large convoy including troop transports sailed from Brest, France, under François-Joseph-Paul, comte de Grasse. Off the Azores, five ships parted company to challenge the English in the East Indies. The remainder made for the West Indies.

On May 8, 1781, the French frigate Concorde docked at Boston and the son of Comte Rochambeau, the French commander in America, disembarked along with Jacques-Melchior Saint-Laurent, comte de Barras, new commander of the French naval squadron at Newport. The younger Rochambeau, Donatien-Marie-Joseph de Vimeur, carried the welcome news of de Grasse's expected arrival in the West Indies.

Rochambeau and George Washington quickly met at Wethersfield, Connecticut. Rochambeau had been informed privately by his son that de Grasse would definitely sail north in July or August. Washington already

expected him to do so, however, and he wanted de Grasse to strike at New York. Rochambeau preferred to focus on Chesapeake Bay, but he did not say so to Washington.[16] Rochambeau wrote a letter to de Grasse, which was dispatched on the same fast frigate Concorde to Cap François (present-day Cap-Haïtien) in Haiti and was waiting for de Grasse when he put into the port on July 16. In it he urged the admiral to sail to Chesapeake Bay, and he asked de Grasse to respond immediately.[17]

When de Grasse received Rochambeau's letter at Cap François, he sent a reply on the Concorde. On August 15, 1781, the frigate docked at Boston, and Washington and Rochambeau learned that the French fleet was headed for the Chesapeake with 3,500 French soldiers de Grasse was bringing along to reinforce the forces in Virginia.

Leaving 4,000 troops at West Point to watch Clinton in New York, Washington and Rochambeau set out on August 20 with 2,000 Americans and 4,000 French on the 400-mile march to Virginia. On August 30 they were greeted by cheering crowds at Philadelphia, and on September 6 they reached Head of Elk (Elkton), Maryland, the northernmost port of Chesapeake Bay.

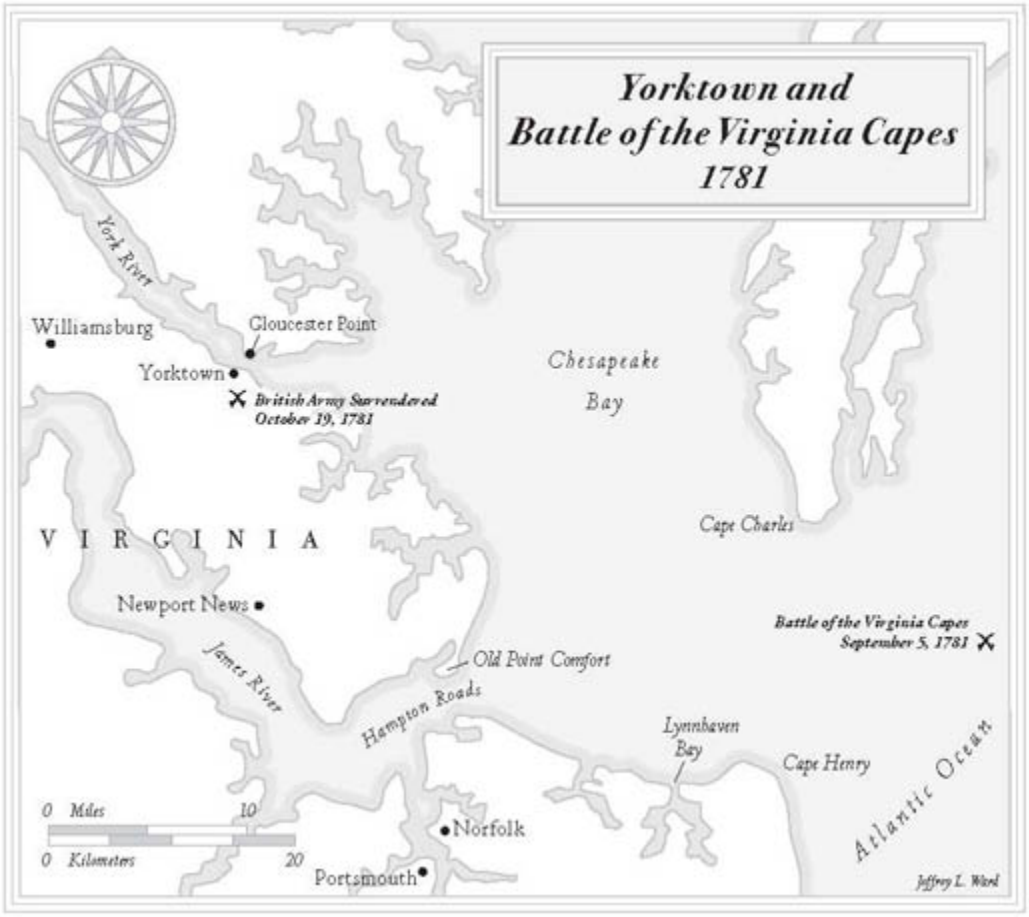
Meanwhile, de Grasse was coming north. He took the longer, little-used Old Bahamas Channel to hide his approach. Pursuing him on the direct route was the British admiral Sir Samuel Hood, with fourteen warships.

Hood had so few ships because of the bad judgment of Sir George Rodney, naval commander in the West Indies. When he received reports that de Grasse's fleet, accompanied by 200 homeward-bound French merchantmen, had left Martinique for Cap François, he assumed that de Grasse would escort the merchant ships back to France and would detach no more than twelve or fourteen warships for action off the American coast. Rodney, therefore, sent only fourteen of his own ships under Admiral Hood to cooperate with Thomas Graves at New York. Rodney figured they would be able to defeat de Grasse.

Returning to England because of bad health, Rodney took the rest of the British fleet and 150 British merchantmen with him. This was a most unfortunate decision because it relied on the enemy making the same judgment that Rodney had made. De Grasse did not do so. He delayed the departure of the French merchantmen and—following the doctrine that

fleets should be concentrated, not dispersed—brought his whole fleet north. The British, who had only five serviceable ships at New York, were therefore inferior in numbers off the American coast.

On August 27, de Barras left Newport to rendezvous with de Grasse. He made a wide circuit out to sea to avoid the English. De Barras had eight men-of-war (ships of the line), four frigates, and eighteen transports—carrying all the French siege artillery.



Admiral Hood, coming north, put into Chesapeake Bay the same day. He was hunting for de Grasse but found the bay empty. Hood sailed on to New York, where Admiral Graves told him de Barras had departed Newport, pointing to a junction with de Grasse and a joint move into the Chesapeake. The combined squadron of nineteen ships, with Graves in command as senior officer, set out to beat the French into the bay.

But it was too late. On August 30, de Grasse's fleet dropped anchor in Lynnhaven Bay, just within the Virginia Capes. The 3,500 troops he brought with him joined Lafayette.

Though surprised to find de Grasse already in the Chesapeake when he arrived on September 5, 1781, Graves prepared to attack. But he took so long to form his ships in line of battle (the ships in a row, one behind the other) that de Grasse was able to get into the Atlantic and challenge the British. In a series of running encounters, de Grasse's ships delivered heavier fire than the British, damaging the British rigging and slowing the ships. Now the British were vulnerable to a new attack by the French. But de Grasse adhered to his main task, keeping the British from entering the bay. He avoided another collision and blocked entrance to the capes time after time. Meanwhile de Barras slipped into the Chesapeake with the French siege artillery. When Graves got word of de Barras's arrival, he realized that he was heavily outnumbered, and returned to New York to repair his rigging. Cornwallis was now trapped within the Chesapeake. No supplies or reinforcements could possibly reach him in time to save him.

Once Graves had departed, de Grasse returned to the Chesapeake, brought some of Washington's and Rochambeau's troops down from Head of Elk and nearby locations (other boats brought the remainder), and agreed to remain inside the bay until Yorktown had surrendered.

Cornwallis was heavily outnumbered and outgunned. Washington and Rochambeau assembled every soldier they could find. By September 27 they had 17,000 men, more than twice the number of Cornwallis's. But lack of firepower was the British commander's greatest weakness. His position at Yorktown depended on the guns of British ships to protect him. But there were no ships, and French siege artillery now ranged around his defenses. They began to bombard the ramparts on October 9. On October 14, French and American detachments seized two key redoubts and quickly mounted cannons on them. These guns dominated the entire British position. A desperate attempt to cross the York River and escape through Gloucester Point on the opposite bank during a heavy storm failed.

On October 17, Cornwallis began negotiations to surrender, and on October 19, his force of 8,000 men marched out to a tune titled "The World Turned Upside Down."

With this capitulation, the British gave up any hope of subduing the colonies. Peace negotiations soon began.[18] But the issue had been decided a month before, off the Virginia Capes. The naval engagement was a small affair, but it isolated Cornwallis and guaranteed his defeat.

Today we look back on the American Revolution and we generally conclude that its outcome was predestined, that the American thrust for independence was too great and too powerful to be deflected. Yet people of good will can solve the most intractable of disputes. And there is nothing inevitable about military victory.

In all conflicts, political solutions and military victories occur when leaders can see ways to achieve them. If there are no such leaders, disaster usually results. The necessity for vision is at the heart of the first and most important axiom of Sun Tzu: “Warfare is the greatest affair of state, the basis of life and death, the way to survival or extinction.”19 American independence came because Britain possessed unbelievably bad leaders who were incapable either of accepting a peaceful solution or of conducting a successful war.

Let us imagine for a moment what might have happened if more capable leaders had come along in Britain during the crucial years between 1770 and 1775 when revolt was building. Two options, one peaceful and one military, were possible.

The peaceful solution would have been for Britain to propose a political union with the colonies, either a federal state or dominion status, such as what Britain came to later with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. If Britain had proposed either solution, most of the impetus for revolt would have died because the colonies would in actuality have become independent. Good feelings, cooperation, and mutual aid would have ensued. The resulting commonwealth of English-speaking countries would have become the most powerful force on earth. Its democratic thrust might have deflected into peaceful paths much of the empire-building greed and avarice that caused such immense conflict, dissension, and wars in the century and a half that followed.

If a political settlement could not have been achieved, a military victory could have been attained with an iron blockade of the colonial ports.

Even if British leaders had chosen the correct way to win, however, they would soon have realized that the colonies were growing so fast that they would one day surpass Britain in size and strength. A condition of political servitude could not be sustained. The only correct solution in 1775, therefore, was not war but the offer of union or dominion status.

Given the selfishness and short-sightedness of the leaders of Britain, neither a peaceful solution nor a military victory was possible. Thus, the denouement at Yorktown was perhaps inevitable after all.

THREE

Napoléon at Waterloo, 1815

The American Revolution helped to bring on the French Revolution of 1789 because it inflamed a desire for democracy among the common people of France, and its cost drove the French monarchy into bankruptcy.

King Louis XVI of France, although his country was the most populous and the richest in Europe, was unable to meet its obligations because the aristocracy paid few taxes. They owned the vast majority of the property and possessed all but a fraction of the wealth, but the peasants and the townspeople (the “Third Estate”) bore the brunt of taxation.

The situation was unsustainable. It ended with the storming of the Bastille, a royal prison, on July 14, 1789, by a Parisian mob. The attack was inspired by the success of the American Revolution and by the teachings of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote in 1762, “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.”

The revolutionaries ousted the king and set off a prolonged collision with the crowned heads of Europe. The royal army dissolved in the chaos of the revolution, and the people had to build a new army from scratch. The National Convention government based the new army on patriotism and popular wars of expansion. The nation’s emotional symbol was Rouget de Lisle’s “Marseillaise,” the most rousing of war hymns, sung for the first time on April 25, 1792.

The patriotic army that materialized was completely alien to the savagely disciplined mercenary armies of the kings. Given any chance for freedom, most mercenary soldiers deserted. The new French soldiers mostly served willingly and were in general more intelligent than the dregs of society who made up the royal armies. Discipline was much less rigid, and volley firing at close range, the primary element of the professional armies, was largely replaced by aimed fire of individual soldiers—almost a direct copy of the practices of Americans in their revolution.

French armies became immensely more mobile and flexible than the mercenary armies. Commanders were not constantly worried that soldiers would desert. Most of the wagons, draft horses, and other paraphernalia that followed royal armies disappeared. Soldiers largely did without tents, supply columns, and bases of supply in the rear. Occupied cities were forced to pay for food for the soldiers. When this failed, the soldiers plundered the enemy countryside. Armies no longer marched in solid masses. They were divided into divisions that moved on separate roads, but they could combine quickly, if necessary, to fight a battle.

This was the new model army that Napoléon Bonaparte inherited. Bonaparte, a poor member of the minor nobility in Corsica, graduated from a military academy in France, having attended on a scholarship paid by the king. He burst upon the world's consciousness when he posted cannons at the entrance to Toulon harbor in 1793. The British fleet—realizing it could be bottled up and destroyed—immediately abandoned the port, and the British occupiers withdrew. Thus almost without losses, Napoléon completely neutralized a powerful enemy force and eliminated a major threat to France.

Promoted to brigadier general, Bonaparte stopped a royalist attempt to restore the monarchy with a "whiff of grapeshot" from cannons that killed many royalists marching against the National Convention on October 5, 1795. His decisive action got him command of the army in Italy in 1796. In the Italian campaign, which followed, Bonaparte shattered the Austrian and Piedmontese armies and gained much territory for France. On November 9, 1799, he staged a coup d'etat and became dictator.

Napoléon is one of the great examples of the influence of genius on the destiny of nations. As the historian Leonard Krieger writes, “History is always the result of the meeting between a situation and a personality.”[1] But it makes all the difference in the world whether this personality is a genius or an ordinary man or woman.

Napoléon dominated warfare from his first campaign in Italy until his defeat at Waterloo in 1815. Throughout this long and decisive period, he encountered no competitor with a trace of his genius, except the English admiral Horatio Nelson. And the arenas in which these men fought were entirely separate.

The appearance of a military genius turns all accepted ways of doing things on their heads. A military genius sees things other people do not see. For example, everyone regarded the narrow entrance to Toulon as a great safety factor, because ships within its enclosed harbor were immune from attacks by enemy ships outside. But when Bonaparte arrived, he at once saw that this same safe harbor could be a prison. All he had to do was seal off its entrance with cannons that could blast any ship that tried to get out.

Seeing things in a broad panorama and being able to take in a situation in a single quick view are marks of military genius. Alexander the Great could observe the dispositions of the enemy as a whole as he approached a field of battle. He saw the enemy’s weakest place at once, and that is where he struck with overwhelming force. Napoléon recognized this gift quite clearly. “Success in war depends on coup d’oeil [seeing things at a glance], and sensing the psychological moment in battle,” he said. “At Austerlitz, had I attacked six hours earlier, I would have been lost.”[2]

Napoléon also recognized that success depends on the general. “An army of lions led by a stag will never be an army of lions,” he said. He also said, “In war men are nothing; it is the man who is everything. The general is the head, the whole of an army. It was not the Roman army that conquered Gaul, but Caesar; it was not the Carthaginian army that made Rome tremble in her gates, but Hannibal; it was not the Macedonian army that reached the Indus, but Alexander.”[3]

The celebrated German military historian Hans Delbrück points out that the secret of the great commander is his blending of boldness and caution.[4] This is also the judgment of Sun Tzu.[5] Napoléon based his

campaigns on meticulous study and preparation.[6] Before every operation he meditated about what might happen if one approach was tried, and what might happen if another was tried. But he never began by asking, “What can the enemy do?” He first sought to place his own army in the best position and then asked, “What now can the enemy do?” This gave Napoléon the initiative. When a campaign opened, Napoléon used his cavalry, spies, and seizure of letters in post offices to confirm or eliminate his hypotheses. In this manner he simplified his own plan and uncovered the enemy’s plan.[7]

The keys to Napoléon’s success were mobility, concentration of force, and surprise. Napoléon said that “the loss of time is irreparable in war. Operations only fail through delays. Space we can recover, lost time never.”[8] For the decisive battle, Napoléon cut down all subsidiary operations so as to concentrate the greatest possible numbers at the point of decision. He knew that an inferior force that is correctly assembled will generally defeat a superior force that is not. His surprises were seldom tactical. Nearly all were strategic. At Marengo in 1800, he used the St. Bernard passes in the western Alps to descend unexpectedly on the rear of the Austrian army in northern Italy. In the 1805 campaign, he marched eastward through southern Germany, then turned abruptly south to fall on the rear of an Austrian army at Ulm on the Danube River. In the 1806 Jena campaign, he advanced precipitately, not from the west as expected, but from southern Germany, cutting the Prussian army off from its supplies and bases. Napoléon’s very supremacy as a field commander became his downfall. As the historian John A. Lynn writes, “He neither knew what was enough nor when to stop.” He thus was doomed to fail sooner or later. In this Napoléon was the exact opposite of Frederick the Great of Prussia. After seizing Silesia, the object of his ambition, Frederick said, “Henceforth I would not attack a cat except to defend myself.”[9]

After his victory over the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz in 1805, Napoléon had the opportunity to impose a peace placing France as the supreme power on the continent. If he had given Austria easy terms and allowed it to expand into the Balkans at the expense of Russia, he would have made Austria an ally and raised it as a bulwark against Russia, the major challenge on land to France. Instead, Napoléon imposed a

humiliating peace and annexed huge portions of Austrian territory, leaving it as an enemy bent on revenge.

A settlement with Austria would have left only Prussia, beside Russia, as a competitor on the continent. Napoléon knew that Prussia's army was a fossil unchanged from the old regime of the eighteenth century and was certain to fall, as in fact it did in 1806. But Prussia, as well, could have been kept intact in the east as a shield against Russia.

Thus France could have imposed a peaceful order on the continent, leaving only Britain as an enemy.[10] But here, as well, he could have reached a settlement. Instead of setting up the Continental System to stop British trade with Europe, he could have opened the ports of the continent to Britain. It would have taken Britain only a short time to realize that its economic interests outweighed its fear of Napoléon. But Napoléon was so obsessed with war that he could imagine no political solutions, only battlefield victories.[11] Accordingly, he attacked Russia in 1812 because it withdrew from the Continental System. This was a fatal decision. Russia was too poor to sustain an invading army, and its people burned most of the food supplies that were available. This forced Napoléon to retreat, and led to inevitable defeat and his banishment to the little Italian island of Elba in 1814.

If Napoléon was such a supreme commander, and if he had no rivals, why, then, did he ultimately lose? The answer can be found in his very supremacy as a war leader. Napoléon depended wholly on himself to devise and carry out his campaigns. Part of the reason was that he felt he understood warfare better than anyone else. But more important was his realization that he was an upstart who had seized power by a coup d'etat and who held it as an autocrat. He never felt secure as chief of the French state.

Accordingly, the officers he promoted to become his marshals were not brought up to command but to obey. Napoléon told his chief of staff, Marshal Louis-Alexandre Berthier, "Keep strictly to the orders which I give you; I alone know what I must do." His memorialist, Armand-Augustin-Louis, marquis de Caulaincourt, wrote, "No one, not even the general staff, dared to assume the responsibility of giving the most trifling order."[12]

Personal command had been difficult enough in the eighteenth century when armies were comparatively small. But warfare in the Napoleonic era became ever more intense and complex. Armies grew far too large for a single person to control. Although Napoléon adopted the division system of a force of all arms, and the corps system of several divisions capable of standing alone for some time, he did not give the commanders of these bodies freedom to act on their own.

This failure had two major consequences. It became impossible for Napoléon to control adequately the large armies that came into being from 1807 onward. And the generals Napoléon selected never developed into leaders who could make and carry out independent decisions. This grew into a deadly flaw. The incapacity of subordinate commanders was the principal reason why Waterloo turned out as it did.

Living on Elba was a poor substitute for running the French Empire, and the island was geographically too close to France for Napoléon to resist returning. In March 1815, Napoléon succumbed to the enticement, remounted the throne, and challenged the allies to remove him if they could.

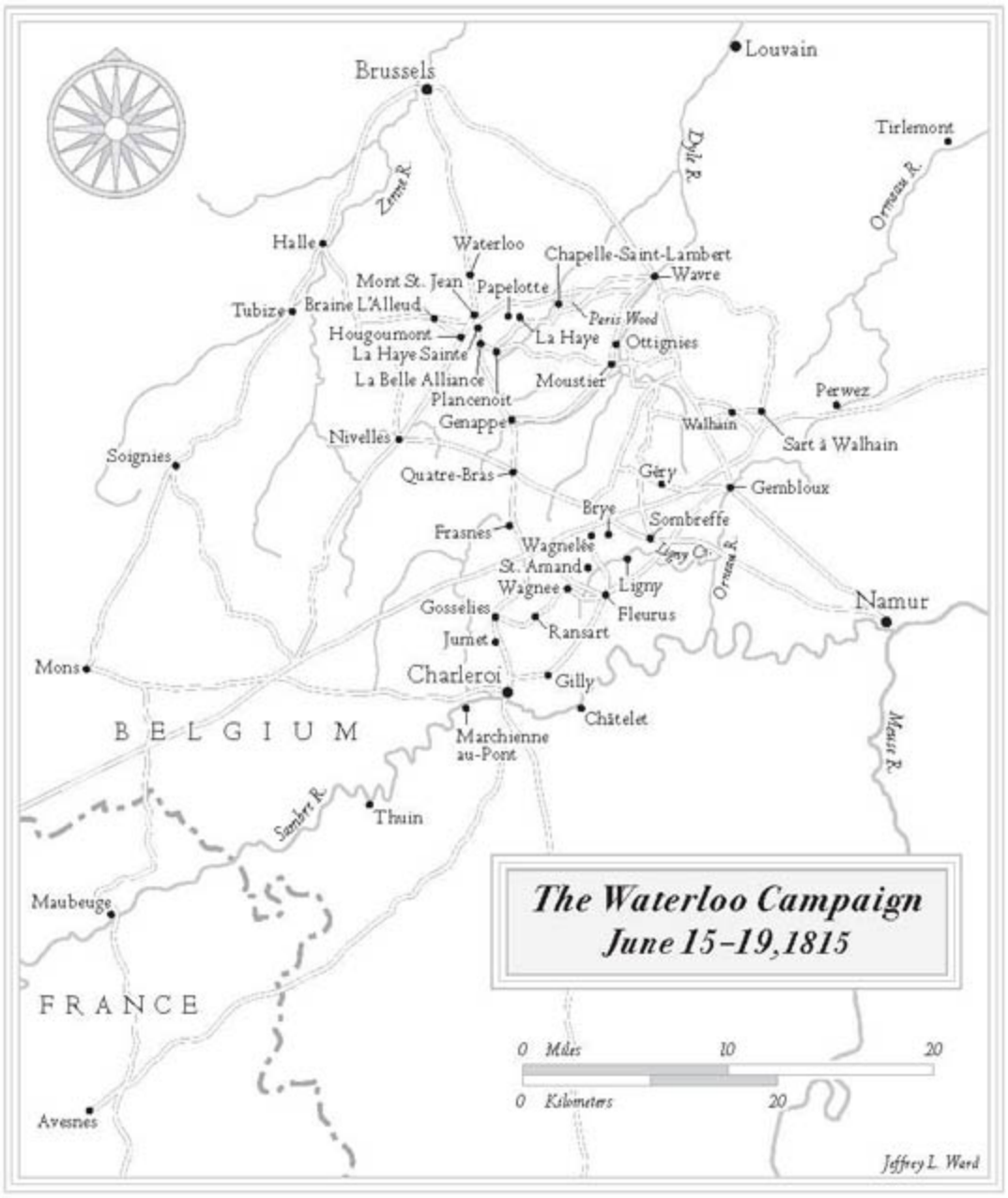
The allies, principally the Austrians, Prussians, Russians, and British, had twice the forces Napoléon could raise. They resolved to close in on Paris from north and east and crush Napoléon by force of arms. From Belgium, a British-Dutch-German army under Arthur Wellesley, duke of Wellington, and a Prussian army under Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher would press south. From Germany an Austrian army under Marshal Karl Philipp, prince of Schwarzenberg would advance west, with the Russians following.[13]

Schwarzenberg, marching through Germany, would be slow. The Russians, coming behind, would be even slower. Napoléon could ignore both for the moment.

A fortuitous opportunity appeared in Belgium. The combined forces of Wellington, with 88,000 men, and Blücher, with 123,000 men, were much greater than the French forces guarding the Belgian frontier, 124,000 men. But the allies were not concentrated. Wellington had posted his army in the vicinity of Brussels, and Blücher around Namur, thirty-five miles southeast. Between them lay a large gap. If Napoléon could seize the

crossroads of Quatre-Bras (Four Branches) halfway between Brussels and Namur, he would be in the central position between the British and the Prussian armies. From there he could beat in turn the British and the Prussians, then swing southeast to deal with the Austrians and the Russians.

Napoléon used the central position wherever possible, and it is a basic element in Sun Tzu's axioms.[14] But generals have seldom adopted the strategy. Far from seeing the central position as an opportunity, most generals see it as a peril—fearing their army would be crushed if placed between two enemy forces.



To Napoléon, however, the chance to divide his enemy was not to be missed. He ordered the Army of the North (five corps plus the Imperial Guard) to concentrate in the vicinity of Avesnes, France, some thirty miles southwest of Quatre-Bras and twenty-six miles southwest of Charleroi, Belgium. On June 12, he left Paris for Avesnes. The allies only discerned these movements on the night of June 13–14, when Prussian outposts became aware of many bivouac fires along the French-Belgian frontier, which ran in a northwest-southeast direction about thirteen miles northeast

of Avesnes and thirteen miles southwest of Charleroi. The sentries were members of the 33,000-man 1st Corps of Hans Ernst von Zieten, whose most advanced elements were almost on the frontier southwest of Charleroi.

Zieten reported the French presence to Marshal Blücher, who ordered the 1st Corps to pull back to Sombreffe, twelve miles northeast of Charleroi, and directed his other three corps to join it there. His 2nd Corps was just east of Sombreffe, and his 3rd Corps was about fifteen miles to the southeast. But Blücher's 4th Corps was near Liège, thirty miles northeast, and it would take two days or longer to arrive. Bringing together only three of his four corps at Sombreffe was irresponsible, especially since Blücher was determined to accept battle.

So Blücher committed the first violation of a Sun Tzu principle: concentration of as many men as possible at the point of decision. The Prussian commander also perpetrated a related violation of the same principle by placing himself within reach of the French with an inferior force.[15] He should have ordered the concentration of his army farther north, so that his 4th Corps could join the other three corps. Napoléon in fact had anticipated that Blücher would move back toward Liège to bring all his forces together.

On the morning of June 15, Napoléon rode up to Charleroi, twelve miles south of Quatre-Bras. There he made two profoundly bad choices. He gave Marshal Michel Ney command of the left wing of his army, the 1st and 2nd Corps and a cavalry division, and he gave his cavalry chief, Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy, command of his right wing, the 3rd and 4th Corps and two cavalry divisions. Neither commander was adequate for his responsibilities.

Ney, though renowned for his bravery, lacked judgment and had learned little from the many battles he had fought. In 1808 Napoléon had said that Ney was "as ignorant as the last-joined drummer boy." Grouchy was a skilled cavalry commander, but he had never commanded a corps, much less an army wing. Napoléon had refused to take back Joachim Murat, the best cavalry leader in Europe, because Murat had deserted to the allies in January 1814. After Waterloo Napoléon deeply regretted this decision and said that if Murat had been on the scene, he would have won the battle.

Napoléon had left as Paris governor his most able commander, Louis-Nicolas Davout. With vastly inferior forces, Davout pushed back the main Prussian army at Auerstädt and gained an immense French victory in the Jena campaign of 1806. Napoléon said he could trust no one else to hold the capital. Davout replied, “If you are victor, Paris will be yours, and if you are beaten, neither I nor anyone else can do anything for you.”[16]

Napoléon had named two officers who could not make good decisions. These fateful choices were going to determine the outcome of the battle of Waterloo.

Napoléon’s instructions to Ney were to sweep the enemy off the Brussels-Charleroi road and to occupy Quatre-Bras that very day. Napoléon ordered Grouchy to push back the Prussians toward Sombreffe. His aim was to separate the British and the Prussian armies so neither could help the other.

Grouchy moved too slowly, and Napoléon went forward himself and speeded up the attack, driving Zieten’s corps back to Ligny Creek, four miles southwest of Sombreffe.

Meanwhile, Ney drove a Prussian detachment out of the village of Gossalies, a few miles north of Charleroi, but sent only his cavalry division on to Quatre-Bras, seven miles beyond. There the horsemen encountered the Dutch Nassau Brigade. Unable to overrun it, they withdrew.

Marshal Ney violated a basic Sun Tzu principle on this day. One must know the enemy’s plans and the terrain, Sun Tzu says. One must not learn them as one goes along. The failure to do so makes for ill-considered decisions.[17] Ney should have put together a combined force of infantry, artillery, and cavalry to seize Quatre-Bras. More important, he should have commanded this force in person. If he had done so, he would have seen that the crossroads were lightly held, and he could have seized them easily. Napoléon said that an officer who does not know the enemy’s dispositions does not know his trade. How ironic that the very person he put in charge of his left wing was just such an officer!

Thus Ney committed the first great strategic blunder of the Waterloo campaign. He had not ensured that Napoléon could place his army between the British and the Prussians. Napoléon, however, was not worried. He had seen no aggressive move from the Prussians, and there was no heavy British

presence at Quatre-Bras. He told Ney to occupy the crossroads the next day, June 16.

But at 8:00 a.m. on June 16, everything changed. French cavalry scouts reported that strong Prussian columns were approaching. But only three of Blücher's corps—84,000 men—were assembling around the village of Ligny, along Ligny Creek. His 4th Corps of 31,000 men was still far away, and Wellington, at Brussels, could not possibly help him. Blücher had handed Napoléon the chance to attack only three-quarters of his army.

Napoléon quickly developed a battle plan. He had just 68,000 men at Ligny, but he sent only his cavalry to confront Blücher's easternmost corps along the creek. This allowed him to concentrate his two corps in a direct frontal attack against the two Prussian corps around Ligny. With the odds even, Blücher would have to use all his reserves to stop the attacks.

This would leave Blücher unable to defend against the decisive blow that Napoléon planned to deliver against Blücher's right rear. Napoléon expected the job of seizing Quatre-Bras to be easy, and figured that Ney could send one of his corps to deliver the blow on Blücher's right rear at Brye, five miles southeast of Quatre-Bras and two miles northwest of Ligny. While this strike was being delivered, Napoléon planned for his Imperial Guard, an elite force of veterans reserved for culminating attacks, to smash through the center of the Prussian line at Ligny. Napoléon expected these two near simultaneous assaults to destroy the two westernmost of Blücher's corps and compel the easternmost corps to fall back toward the Prussian supply base at Liège to the northeast—and thus entirely out of the campaign.

In his confidence that Ney would carry out his part of the plan, Napoléon did not order forward his reserve force, the 6th Corps of 10,000 men, under Georges Mouton, comte de Lobau. It remained at Charleroi. This was an inexcusable mistake. If Lobau had been moved up to a point a few miles west of Ligny, he could have swung onto the right rear of the Prussians, and Ney need not have been called on. Napoléon finally ordered the 6th Corps to Fleurus, just south of Ligny, late in the afternoon, but it arrived too late to play any role in the battle. Napoléon never explained this, the first in a number of severe tactical errors that he was to make in this campaign. In the aftermath of Waterloo, few observers recognized these blunders, and no one asked Napoléon to justify or excuse them.

In the meantime. Wellington had made a bad judgment when he learned that French forces had been spotted along the frontier. He assumed erroneously that Napoléon was going to advance on Mons, thirty-five miles southwest of Brussels, and then turn northward on Brussels to try to cut off his communications with England. This was a most illogical conclusion, since the main British supply base was the great deepwater port of Antwerp, north of Brussels, and an attack by Napoléon from the south would merely drive Wellington back on his supplies.

Wellington's incorrect decision illustrates why it is important to find out the enemy's plans before committing one's army. By failing to determine Napoléon's true intention, Wellington violated a cardinal Sun Tzu principle: do not assume the enemy will do what one thinks he will do, but find out what he is actually going to do. Wellington should have waited until Napoléon showed his hand before committing himself in any direction.[18]

Fortunately for the British, Napoléon reasoned that Wellington would do the sensible thing and move his army toward Quatre-Bras and junction with the Prussians. So his original dispositions were aimed at meeting the British at Quatre-Bras. Assuming that the enemy will make the rational decision might, in theory, be a violation of Sun Tzu's rule first to ascertain the enemy's actual plans. In the absence of sure knowledge, however, the safest choice is the correct choice. In Napoléon's case, this was to assume that Wellington would move on Quatre-Bras at the first opportunity, and to make preparations accordingly.

After issuing his orders to turn south from Brussels, Wellington went to a ball being put on by the duchess of Richmond on the evening of June 15. During the party he got word that Napoléon had reached Charleroi, thirteen miles north of the frontier, with his entire army. Wellington and the duke of Richmond went into the study to examine a map. Wellington at once realized that Napoléon was threatening to place himself between the British and the Prussian armies. "Napoléon has humbugged me, by God!" he shouted. "He has gained twenty-four hours march on me."[19]

Wellington now directed the British army to Quatre-Bras. But many of his officers were at the duchess's party, and the army endured extreme

confusion getting on the march. It was late on the afternoon of June 16 before strong British forces arrived at Quatre-Bras.

Therefore, Marshal Ney had plenty of time to seize Quatre-Bras on the morning of June 16. But Napoléon's choice of the wrong left-wing commander now had portentous consequences. Ney did precisely nothing until 11:00 a.m., when he at last ordered the 2nd Corps, under Marshal Comte Honoré-Charles Reille, to move forward and seize the crossroads. At the same time, he ordered the 1st Corps, under Marshal Jean-Baptiste Drouet, comte d'Erlon, to advance to Gosselies, seven miles south of Quatre-Bras.

Accordingly, when Wellington arrived at Quatre-Bras at 10:00 a.m. on June 16, he found one of his divisions in possession, but no enemy. While the rest of his army was frantically trying to reach the crossroads, Wellington rode over to Brye, five miles southeast of Quatre-Bras and a couple of miles west of Sombreffe, where he met with Blücher at 1:00 p.m. Wellington agreed to come to Blücher's assistance, provided he was not attacked himself. After looking over Blücher's defensive preparations around Ligny, Wellington remarked to his military attaché, "If they fight here, they [the Prussians] will be damnably mauled."[20]

When Wellington arrived back at Quatre-Bras around 3:00 p.m., the situation had become critical. All thought of helping Blücher vanished. The crossroads were being held by only 7,800 infantry and fourteen cannons. Reille's 22,000-man 2nd Corps backed up by sixty cannons had appeared around 2:00 p.m. Reille could easily have seized the position, but he moved so slowly that a large number of British troops arrived in time to stop the advance.

Reille was now slightly outnumbered, and despite heavy fighting, he was unable to break through. Ney was impatiently awaiting the arrival of d'Erlon's corps, but he had been so tardy in ordering it forward that the corps was still some distance away.

Meanwhile, beginning at 2:30 p.m., the French 3rd Corps attacked the Prussians at St. Amand, two miles southwest of Ligny, while the 4th Corps assaulted Ligny. But Prussian resistance was extremely strong. Around 3:30 p.m. Napoléon sent a note to Ney to dispatch d'Erlon's corps onto the Prussian right rear at Brye immediately.

By 5:00 p.m. Blücher's reserves were exhausted. He had committed nearly all of his men, except his cavalry, while Napoléon still had 10,000 men of the Imperial Guard uncommitted. He expected to hear the sound of d'Erlon's guns on the Prussian rear around 6:00 p.m. This is when he intended to launch the Guard against the Prussian center at Ligny.

However, Charles Huchet, comte de la Bédoyère, the messenger sent by Napoléon, had completely misunderstood his instructions. When he found d'Erlon on the road to Quatre-Bras, he ordered him to turn about and to march—not on the Prussian rear—but on the *French* rear!

While Napoléon was making final preparations for the Guard to assault Ligny, General Dominique-René Vandamme, commander of the 3rd Corps, rode up and announced that a heavy enemy force was approaching Fleurus, directly behind the French line. Napoléon at once suspended the Guard attack and set up blocks to stop the expected assault. But—something Vandamme himself had not done—he sent an aide to find out for certain whether this column was an enemy force. The aide came back at 6:30 p.m. with the news that it was d'Erlon's corps.[21]

It was now too late to send the corps onto the Prussian rear. Napoléon decided to go ahead and launch the Guard attack. It went in at 7:30 p.m. just as a heavy thunderstorm erupted, making it impossible to fire muskets. The Guard drove the Prussians out of Ligny with naked bayonets.

When the rain ceased, Blücher assembled all of his cavalry and, with him at their head, launched charges against the Guard, which had formed up in battalion squares with bayonets projecting to repel cavalry assaults. The attacks failed, and in the resulting melee, Blücher's horse was struck by a bullet and rolled over its rider. His aide dragged the seventy-three-year-old commander, bruised and half-conscious, to safety. If he had not rescued Blücher, the battle of Waterloo would have had an utterly different outcome.

The 1st and 2nd Prussian Corps fell back west of Sombreffe, just as Napoléon had expected.[22] If d'Erlon had been on hand, they would have been destroyed. Even so, Ligny was a great French victory, costing the Prussians 25,000 men and the French about 11,000. Some 10,000 of the Prussian losses consisted of deserters, however, who made for Liège. These

were largely men from former French provinces, and their sympathies were with Napoléon.

At 9:00 p.m., the fight at Quatre-Bras ended in a draw. Losses were 4,000 on each side. The British still held the field, but they would have to retreat the next day, because, with the Prussians defeated, the French could sweep around their rear and cut them off from Brussels.

Despite the blunders of Ney, Napoléon had driven Blücher from the field. He had every reason to believe the Prussians would retire on their supply base at Liège to the northeast, and Napoléon could turn against Wellington in safety. On the morning of June 17, 1815, Napoléon sent Grouchy with his two corps (3rd and 4th) and his cavalry to find the Prussians and report back. The campaign of Waterloo now took on a life of its own, unrelated to the plans of Napoléon, and dependent on the flawed visions of the two wing commanders, Grouchy and Ney. Both men began to make one disastrous blunder after another.

Grouchy's first cavalry reports were that the Prussians were in full retreat on Liège. But he didn't realize that these were the deserters who had fled the field at Ligny. He also didn't know that the Prussian army actually had retired on Wavre, north of Ligny. The Prussian chief of staff had found that many of the troops had moved in that direction, and it was a convenient rallying point. When Blücher recovered, he took advantage of this unanticipated decision and resolved to go to the aid of the British if attacked.

Meanwhile, Ney, at Quatre-Bras, was doing precisely nothing. Wellington received a Prussian officer at 9:00 a.m. on June 17, who informed him of Blücher's retreat and asked Wellington's intentions. The duke replied that he was falling back to the low ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean, just south of the village of Waterloo, about fifteen miles from Brussels. There he would offer Napoléon battle if Blücher would support him with one corps.

At 10:00 a.m. the retreat began. The British troops were unmolested because Ney had ignored Napoléon's order to attack at first light. Ney's troops were still in bivouac when Napoléon rode up at 1:00 p.m. Livid, he got the pursuit under way at 2:00 p.m. The British had a good head start,

their advantage increased by a huge thunderstorm that kept the French from advancing across the country to cut them off and force them to stand.[23]

Before nightfall, the British had pulled up on Mont-Saint-Jean. At 6:30 p.m. on June 17, Napoléon's vanguard arrived at La Belle Alliance on the next low ridge south and, sending cavalry forward, found Wellington's army.

Meanwhile Grouchy had finally discovered that the Prussians were at Wavre, nine miles east of Mont-Saint-Jean. At 2:00 a.m. on June 18, Napoléon received a message from Grouchy: "If I find the mass of the Prussians is retiring on Wavre, I shall follow them, so as to prevent their gaining Brussels and to separate them from Wellington."[24] This was gratifying news. It indicated that Grouchy was fully aware that his job was to place his two corps between the Prussians and the British and so prevent the Prussians from reinforcing Wellington.

But it turned out that Napoléon's faith in Grouchy's good judgment was misplaced.

Napoléon replied to Grouchy, describing the situation at Waterloo, and telling Grouchy to head for Wavre, push the Prussians before him, and keep in touch. The message was not clearly written, but Napoléon assumed that the right-wing commander understood that he must block the Prussians from advancing on Waterloo. Yet, as events were to show, Grouchy incredibly did not see something that was plain common sense. His idea was to press on the rear of the Prussian army with a small force.

At 11:30 a.m. on June 18, Grouchy and Marshal Étienne-Maurice Gérard, commander of the 4th Corps, were standing in the town of Walhain, seven miles south of Wavre. They heard gunfire from the direction of Mont-Saint-Jean. This was the opening round of the battle of Waterloo, and Gérard said, "I think we ought to march on the cannons," thus interposing Grouchy's wing between Waterloo and Wavre.[25]

But Grouchy said there was no cause to do anything. The bombardment, he said, was merely a delaying action by the retreating British rear guard. Gérard argued on the contrary, that the cannonade signified impending battle. Grouchy's two corps, he insisted, should be between the two hostile armies. If they stayed where they were, on the rear of the Prussians, a small defending force could stop them, and the Prussian

main body could advance directly to aid the British. But Grouchy refused to move.

If Grouchy had heeded Gérard, his two corps could have struck Blücher's left, or southern, flank as he was turning westward toward Waterloo. This would have prevented Blücher from reinforcing Wellington.[26]

Instead, Grouchy continued to march north on Wavre with a single column. This column launched timid attacks on the tail of the Prussian army and accomplished nothing. By his stupidity, Grouchy had eliminated the entire right wing of Napoléon's army on the day when the destiny of Europe was being decided.

Wellington's move to Waterloo exemplified an important injunction of Sun Tzu: to select and occupy a battlefield first, forcing the enemy to attack under conditions favorable to the defender and unfavorable to him.

Early on the morning of June 18, 1815, Wellington received a message that Blücher's 4th Corps, under Friedrich Wilhelm von Bülow, would march to his support, followed by a second corps. Wellington thus knew that if he could hold on, an attack was coming on the right, or eastern, flank of the French army.

Napoléon was not happy that the inaction of Marshal Ney had permitted the British army to get away from Quatre-Bras on June 17 and establish itself in a strong position at Waterloo. But he had every reason to congratulate himself. He had sent the Prussian army flying at Ligny. He believed the remaining Prussians were being blocked from marching to the relief of the British. He had assembled a stronger army at Waterloo than Wellington: 72,000 men against Wellington's 67,000 men.

Napoléon had attained this numerical superiority because of a perfectly senseless decision by Wellington. The duke had posted an entire corps, 17,000 men under Frederick, prince of Orange-Nassau of the Netherlands, at Halle and Tubize, a dozen miles west of Waterloo. He had put the corps there for fear that the French might advance directly on Brussels from the south. This was far-fetched reasoning. Once Napoléon concentrated at La Belle Alliance, the ridgeline just south of the British center, it was certain he would not move on Brussels. Wellington's decision

was a flagrant violation of the principle of concentration of force. Prince Frederick's corps was so far away that it could not possibily take part in the battle at Waterloo.

Napoléon intended to combine his superiority of force with a huge battery of eighty cannons that he had mounted at La Belle Alliance. His intention was to pound the British positions with artillery fire and then to make a massive, overwhelming assault directly on the left center of the British line. Napoléon believed he could drive the British back in disorder to Brussels and then turn and destroy the Prussian army.

But several things were wrong with this scenario. Napoléon was not aware that the utter failure of Grouchy guaranteed a massive strike on his right, or eastern, flank. He also was continuing to rely on Marshal Ney to direct the attack on the British line, and he had seen how Ney had already failed time after time. There was every reason to expect Ney to fail again.

But the single greatest thing wrong was that Napoléon was planning to violate one of his own fundamental rules of battle. Ever since his first campaign in Italy in 1796–1797, Napoléon had tried to avoid frontal attacks, and instead had tried to swing around on the enemy's flank or rear.

Such turning movements are part of Sun Tzu's primary two-element method for winning battlefield victories. Sun Tzu postulates a zheng, an orthodox, direct element that fixes the enemy in place, and a qi, an unorthodox, indirect element that flanks or encircles the enemy and achieves victory. Zheng at Waterloo would have been the main assault on the British main line along the Mont-Saint-Jean ridgeline. Qi would have been a simultaneous assault on Wellington's flank.[27]

Napoléon had a splendid opportunity to make a flank attack at Waterloo. Wellington's left, or eastern, flank was protected by the presence of the Prussian army nine miles away at Wavre. Even though Napoléon did not know the Prussians were approaching, it would have been perilous to launch a flank move in that direction. Wellington's right, or western, flank, on the other hand, was bare and fully exposed, since Prince Frederick's corps was a dozen miles away and would have been unable to arrive in time. Napoléon could have launched one of his corps around this flank while Wellington was wholly absorbed in containing Napoléon's frontal attack against the left center of his line. It would almost certainly have

shattered the British army well before the Prussian corps could arrive on the scene.

On this day of Waterloo, however, Napoléon intended to attack headlong into the teeth of the waiting British army. This plan was not only a repudiation of Napoléon's own doctrine but also a violation of a Sun Tzu principle. "Do not attack well-regulated formations," Sun Tzu advises. He also admonishes armies to go around obstacles. "To avoid the substantial, strike the vacuous."[28]

The failure of Napoléon to follow this rule at Waterloo is most baffling and has never been explained. He committed virtually all of the errors that he himself had avoided in the years past and that Sun Tzu would have warned against. Perhaps Napoléon was confident that he could smash the British line with ease. But that is scarcely a reason. There are many imponderables in warfare. Why he ignored his own canon at Waterloo remains one of the greatest imponderables of all.

The focal point or junction of the British position was located where the north-south Brussels-Charleroi road crossed the east-west Mont-Saint-Jean ridgeline. British positions ran southwest for a little over a mile to the walled château, or farmstead, of Hougoumont. The line extended east of the junction for about the same distance along the road to Wavre. It was anchored on the east by the walled and solidly built farmstead of Papelotte and the nearby hamlet of La Haye.

Wellington had no possibility of doing more than defending against a direct attack. By placing Prince Frederick's corps so far west, he had eliminated any chance of using it at Waterloo.

Prior to the frontal attack on the British line, Napoléon sent in a diversionary attack on Hougoumont with a division commanded by his brother Jérôme. Napoléon's intention was to draw additional British troops into this fight in order to weaken the British center.

This was not sensible reasoning, because it tied up French troops in a static, pointless battle. An attack on a fortified position like Hougoumont is directly contrary to Sun Tzu principles. The lowest realization of warfare, according to Sun Tzu, is to attack fortified cities, which is the same as

attacking strongly fortified positions. “If you attack cities, the troops’ strength will be exhausted,” Sun Tzu says.[29]

The attack was further hamstrung by the failure of Jérôme to bring along artillery to blast holes in the solid walls enclosing the farmstead. As a result, he repeatedly assaulted the walls with infantry and was repeatedly thrown back. Later, French batteries did move up and bombard the farmstead, setting fire to most of the buildings. The fight grew into a bloody confrontation involving 14,000 French soldiers and 12,000 British and German soldiers. But it contributed nothing to the battle.

Meanwhile, Napoléon prepared for Marshal d’Erlon’s 1st Corps of 19,000 men to assault Wellington’s left wing east of the Brussels-Charleroi road. While doing so, he spotted “a dark cloud” emerging from the woods of Chapelle-Saint-Lambert, four miles to the east. A moment later a rider came up with the news that it was the advanced guard of Bülow’s 31,000-man corps. Napoléon was surprised, but he was confident he could ruin Wellington long before the Prussians could arrive. He ordered two cavalry divisions to slow Bülow’s advance, and detailed Marshal Lobau to follow with his small 6th Corps of 10,000 men to hold the Prussians in check.

When Marshals Ney and d’Erlon launched their frontal attack, they committed a series of blunders that played a major role in the outcome.

Ever since the French army had been reorganized after the French Revolution, tactical doctrine had been to advance battalions of 500 to 600 men in column (or tight marching) formation into battle. Troops moved much faster in this way than in extended lines of battle. The enemy waited in line of battle, for it was the least vulnerable to artillery fire. If a cannon ball hit a British line of battle, only two men would be lost, since the British line was two men deep. If a shot hit a massed column, on the other hand, all the men in a file would be bowled over. This could affect ten or more men.

As French battalions neared the enemy, they deployed into battle lines three men deep. Just before deployment, doctrine called for the French cavalry to threaten the enemy, forcing the enemy to form open or hollow squares, with bayonets projecting outward on all four sides. Cavalry could seldom break these squares. But a square was generally four men deep, and it had only a fraction of the fire power of the same unit in line of battle.

Doctrine called for the French infantry, now in line of battle, to pour their much heavier fire on the enemy squares, while also pounding them with case or grape shot from light regimental cannons pushed forward with the infantry. Case and grape shot consisted of deadly metal balls sprayed into enemy formations. Once the squares were thrown into confusion, doctrine called for the cavalry to charge and scatter the fugitives.

No one knows why, but Ney and d'Erlon completely disregarded French doctrine. They employed no light artillery and no cavalry in the attack. They also drew up two divisions and two brigades in formations 200 men wide, with one battalion close behind the other. These huge masses were too close together to deploy easily into separate battalion lines of battle when they got close to the enemy. It was an absurd method of attack, and it defied common sense. Sun Tzu emphasizes that selection of wise generals is vital in war.[30] The lack of judgment of Ney and d'Erlon was fateful for the French cause.

Meanwhile one French brigade advanced against the walled farmstead of La Haye Sainte on the Brussels-Charleroi road, just below the summit of Mont-Saint-Jean, and another brigade advanced against the farmstead of Papelotte and the hamlet of La Haye on the east. But neither had any light artillery or cavalry support.

These attacks exemplify Sun Tzu's admonition against attacking fortified places. Although the action against La Haye Sainte isolated the defenders, 400 soldiers of the King's German Legion under Major George Baring, the French could neither capture the place nor advance beyond it. Likewise, a German force of 900 men at Papelotte and La Haye held on doggedly to both places all day.

Wellington had pulled all his men—except a Dutch-Belgian brigade of 2,500 men—off the ridgeline to lie down on the reverse slope, where they were virtually immune to the French artillery fire. When the French lines approached the summit, Wellington's men had only to stand up, advance a few paces, and deliver a withering volley.

This combination of Wellington's defensive tactics and Ney's and d'Erlon's abandonment of the rules of engagement placed the French in a desperate tactical position. Without cavalry and light artillery, the allied formations could not be forced into squares. Thus, the allies' lines of battle

gave them maximum fire power, whereas the French had a difficult time moving from their mass formations into lines of battle, with consequent loss of time, fire power, and cohesion.

As the French neared the hedgerow-bordered road to Wavre running along the ridgeline—behind which the British were hiding—they forced the Dutch-Belgian brigade to retreat hastily. As the French attempted to deploy into lines of battle, the British infantry pushed forward to the road and delivered crushing volleys at a forty-pace range. Even so, the French gave as good as they got, and the battle was degenerating into a bloody stalemate all along the roadway.

At this moment, two British cavalry brigades, about 2,000 men, charged at full gallop, bounded over the road, and drove straight at the French. Since the French had insufficient time to form defensive squares, they took to their heels. Most rushed back down the slope to safety, but numbers of them surrendered. Meanwhile the British cavalry continued their wild charge, climbing the slope of La Belle Alliance and making for the huge French battery of eighty guns. Here French cavalry counterattacked.

In a wild melee the British horsemen were driven back in complete defeat, losing a large part of their strength in this brief, mad encounter. The Royal Scots Greys, for example, returned with only 50 of their original 300 men. The wasteful charge on the French guns left the British cavalry weak for the remainder of the battle. At 3:30 p.m., Napoléon ordered Ney to capture the walled farmstead of La Haye Sainte. Napoléon intended to use it as the base from which to launch a grand advance.

But Ney was able to get together only two brigades, and the attack failed. Now Ney made a blunder of monumental proportions. He saw British ammunition wagons streaming to the rear. They were actually carrying off wounded, but Ney jumped to the conclusion that the British were retreating. He ordered 5,000 French cavalry to charge the British.

This attack—like d’Erlon’s infantry assault—was carried out completely contrary to doctrine. Cavalry operating alone could only force the enemy into squares, which horsemen could not crack. But Ney had not brought cavalry and light guns along in the infantry attack, and now he didn’t bring infantry and light guns along in the cavalry attack.

The French cavalry also blundered. As they swarmed up the slopes of Mont-Saint-Jean, the British infantry formed into squares, but Wellington ordered the gunners to keep firing case and grape shot until the last moment, then to rush into the center of the squares with their horses. The gunners fled as the French horsemen climbed toward them, but the French had made no preparations to spike the cannons they now captured. This could have been done quickly by driving headless nails into the priming tubes through which the gunpowder was ignited. The guns remained as potent as ever.

The cavalry charged the infantry squares with great valor. Captain Rees Howell Gronow, of the English Foot Guards, described the scene: “We saw large masses of cavalry advance like an overwhelming, long, moving line. In a short period they were within twenty yards of us, shouting ‘Vive l’Empereur!’ The word of command, ‘Prepare to receive cavalry,’ had been given, every man in the front ranks knelt, and a wall bristling with steel, held together by steady hands, presented itself to the infuriated cuirassiers.”[31]

When Henry William Paget, Lord Uxbridge, Wellington’s cavalry commander, saw that the French attacks were failing, he hurled his remaining horsemen at the French, driving them back. The gunners rushed out of the squares, manned their pieces, and poured case and grape shot into the retreating enemy, causing great losses.

Napoléon was preoccupied with the arrival of Bülow’s Prussian corps on his right flank. Afraid that the cavalry repulse might panic the army, he ordered Marshal François-Êtienne de Kellermann to support Ney in another attack with his cavalry corps. Thus Napoléon also disregarded tactical doctrine in sending forward cavalry almost totally unsupported. His fault illustrates that no commander can think of everything in the stress of battle.

More than 9,000 French cavalry formed up, filling nearly all the space between the farmsteads of Hougoumont on the west and La Haye Sainte on the Brussels-Charleroi road. This attack was backed up by only a single artillery battery.

This second cavalry assault met with the same fate as the first. The gunners fled into the infantry squares, and the squares withstood the cavalry charges. Once the attack was repulsed, the gunners rushed out and pounded

the retreating horsemen. But the strain on the British was immense. Wellington had used up his reserves.

Around 6:00 p.m., Napoléon ordered Ney to seize the farmstead of La Haye Sainte, irrespective of cost. This he finally achieved, but only because the defending King's German Legion, which had held the place without support all day long, finally ran out of ammunition. Only a few of the German defenders survived.

Ney now moved a few horse artillery pieces toward Wellington's center and began to pulverize the infantry, still in squares, with case shot. The effect of the fire shows what might have happened if Ney had used more cannons and had brought up infantry in his cavalry assaults. An eyewitness, Alexander Cavalié Mercer, a British battery commander, reported on the rapidity of fire and precision of a single battery set up on a knoll ahead of La Haye Sainte. "Every shot took effect, and I certainly expected we should be annihilated," he reported. "The whole livelong day had cost us nothing like this."[32] Cannon all but destroyed three British regiments. The center of the British line of battle was so weakened that it could not have withstood a strong assault. The 27th Regiment of Foot, for example, lost two-thirds of its men. The men were lying dead, still in rows in their square.

Wellington was deeply perturbed, but he was determined to hold on to his position until the Prussians arrived.[33]

Ney sent to Napoléon an urgent request for troops. Despite the vast accumulation of mistakes by Ney and others, the moment of decision had arrived. One more push and the French could penetrate the British line and win victory.

Napoléon, however, was unable to make this final push because the advance of the Prussians on his right flank had produced a crisis. French cavalry and Lobau's corps had struck Bülow's columns soon after they emerged from the Paris Wood at Chapelle-Saint-Lambert at 4:00 p.m. But the French were outnumbered three to one, and Lobau withdrew to Plancenoit, a mile east of the Brussels-Charleroi road and directly in the rear of the French line. Prussian infantry drove Lobau's troops out of the village, and Prussian batteries opened fire on the Brussels-Charleroi road. Part of the Imperial Guard retook Plancenoit, but it was thrown out again

about the time Ney was pleading for troops. With disaster facing him, Napoléon formed eleven battalions of the Imperial Guard in as many squares and posted them as a shield in a north-south line facing Plancenoit. Meanwhile two battalions of the Guard advanced on the village, with bayonets fixed. Without firing a shot, the Guards drove the Prussians out of Plancenoit once more.

It was now past 7:00 p.m. Napoléon decided to strike a final blow before the sun set. He assembled five battalions of the Guard, 2,500 men, to assault the Mont-Saint-Jean ridgeline. But the decisive moment had passed. While the Guard was recapturing Plancenoit, Wellington had brought up two cavalry brigades and the Dutch 3rd Division under David Henrik, Baron Chassé, from other parts of the line. He placed Chassé's division immediately behind a weak defending line of British, German, and Dutch regiments just west of the Brussels-Charleroi road. Just to the west of the Dutch was the Guards Brigade under Sir Peregrine Maitland, and just west of Maitland's Brigade was the Light Brigade under Sir Frederick Adam. The men, all in line of battle, sheltered themselves from cannon fire by crouching in the ditch along the Wavre road.

Each Imperial Guard battalion formed a separate unit, each deployed in six lines of 80 or so men. The Guards were accompanied by two horse artillery batteries of six guns each, but no cavalry. So this assault, like the other assaults all day, was contrary to doctrine. Without cavalry threats, the British could not be forced into squares.

The five Imperial Guard battalions separated into three forces. On the east, two battalions of grenadiers overran the weak British, German, and Dutch regiments, but they were stopped by Chassé's Dutchmen, shattered by volleys, and sent flying.

Just to the west, two Imperial Guard chasseur battalions approached the 1,500 men of Maitland's Brigade. An eyewitness. Captain H. W. Powell, First Foot Guards, described the collision: "Suddenly the cannon fire ceased, and as the smoke cleared away a superb sight opened on us. A close column of Guards were ascending the rise shouting '*Vive l'Empereur!*' They continued to advance till within fifty or sixty paces of our front, when the brigade was ordered to stand up. Whether it was from the sudden and unexpected appearance of a corps so near them, which must have seemed as starting out of the ground, or the tremendous heavy fire we

threw into them, *Le Garde*, who had never before failed in an attack, suddenly stopped."[34] The fire crippled the column, and a bayonet charge broke it apart. The surviving guardsmen turned and fled, leaving dead and dying across the field.

A short time later the last Guard battalion moved up on Adam's Light Brigade. As this battalion neared the ridgeline, Sir John Colborne ordered two regiments to wheel forward at a right angle and to pour fire into the flank of the Guards as they passed. The Guards suffered heavily, but turned and delivered devastating volleys on the two regiments, knocking down hundreds of British soldiers in a couple minutes.

Wellington came up at this moment and ordered Colborne to charge the Guard. The British soldiers rushed at the French column with wild shouts. As an eyewitness reported, "In the next ten seconds the Imperial Guard, broken into the wildest confusion, and scarcely firing a shot to cover its retreat, was rushing toward the hollow road in the rear of La Haye Sainte."[35]

Wellington, sitting on his horse and watching the enemy's increasing confusion, decided to finish the day. He spurred to the edge of the ridgeline, stood in his stirrups, took off his hat, and waved it in the air. The signal was understood at once, and a general advance of the entire British army began to pour down the slope and up toward the main French line on La Belle Alliance ridgeline.

The French position collapsed in minutes as soldiers abandoned their guns and fled. Protected by remaining soldiers of the Guard, Napoléon escaped, first to Charleroi, then to Paris on June 21. The next day he abdicated.

The casualties on the memorable day of Waterloo were staggering. Napoléon lost 25,000 men who were killed or wounded; another 8,000 were captured. Wellington lost 15,000 killed or wounded; Blücher 7,000.

On July 15, 1815, Napoléon climbed on board the British warship *Bellerophon* in Rochefort harbor and began his journey to exile on St. Helena in the South Atlantic. He died there in 1821.

We can see in the case of Napoléon that a great commander can fail in the end when he is unable or unwilling to apply just one or two of the rules of

war. Most of the principles that Napoléon read about or discovered on his own were the same ones Sun Tzu preached. Napoléon followed them during most of his career. Although he ignored some of the rules at crucial times, his one great failure as a field commander was his inability to delegate authority. This is what undid him at Waterloo.

During the Napoleonic era, armies became several times larger than those in the dynastic wars that preceded it. In this environment, subordinate commanders had to be extremely capable, and they had to have the authority to act on their own. But Napoléon, unwilling to raise leaders who might oppose him, would not accept independent field commanders. Therefore, it was only a matter of time before he made some mistake that would cause his rule to collapse.

Sun Tzu and all great philosophers urge states to find wise leaders who do not make fatal blunders. This, of course, is the counsel of perfection, and human beings are incapable of attaining it. We must do what we can to choose the best leaders possible, but we must realize that—as happened to Napoléon—human frailty can demolish the best-laid plans.

FOUR

The Civil War Campaigns of 1862

Three transformative changes in warfare—railroads, the electric telegraph, and the Minié-ball rifle—came into use between the end of the Napoleonic era in 1815 and the American Civil War of 1861–1865. Railroads made it possible to move men and supplies in unlimited quantities from one location to another with hitherto unimagined rapidity. The telegraph permitted almost instantaneous communication between distant points, increasing greatly the capability of commanders to make quick decisions. The Minié-ball rifle revolutionized the nature of combat because it had an effective range of 400 yards, four times that of the standard infantry weapon, the smoothbore musket.

Commanders rapidly adjusted to the logistics of the railroad and to the speed of the telegraph. They were less able to change infantry tactics. For over two centuries, the standard method of reaching a decision had been to march long lines of soldiers up to a defending enemy force. Both sides then discharged volleys of fire. When one side began to waver, the other side usually won the battle by launching a bayonet charge. In the Civil War, commanders could think of no other way of deciding a battle. But casualties were unprecedented because advancing forces were subjected to accurate fire for several times the distance they had to endure from muskets. In the Civil War as a whole, six out of seven attacks failed.

Only one officer, the Confederate general Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, devised an alternative solution to the offensive battle. But he faced tremendous difficulties in trying to convince his superiors to follow it.

If there ever was an intellectual descendant of Sun Tzu, it was Stonewall Jackson. His methods in the campaigns of 1862 embodied virtually all of Sun Tzu’s primary axioms: avoid strength, strike at weakness, go around the enemy, use deception not power to overcome, seize something the enemy must seek to recover, and induce the enemy to attack well-prepared positions and be defeated.

Jackson also sought to strike at the heart of Union power, its factories, cities, and railroads. This embodied Sun Tzu’s most profound advice: to destroy the very will of the enemy to resist.[1] A drive into the North could have won the war for the South in weeks. But Jackson was unable to induce the Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, and his military adviser, Robert E. Lee, to carry out this campaign. Davis and Lee abandoned Jackson’s war of maneuver and took up a long war of attrition, of slowly wearing down resistance. This was a war that the South, with one-eleventh of the industry and one-third of the manpower of the North, was bound to lose.

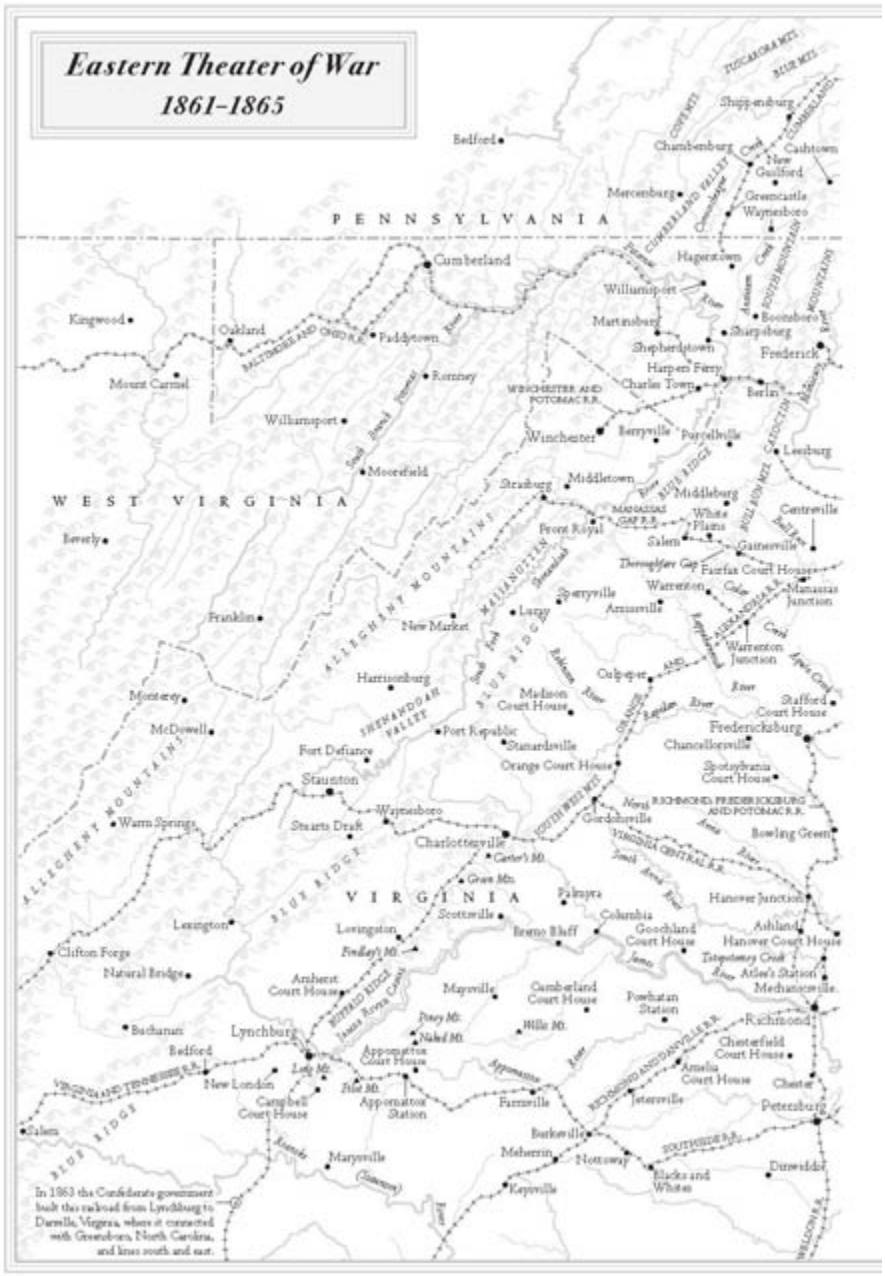
Therefore the campaigns of 1862 display in very graphic form the distinctions between what was achieved when commanders adopted policies that were consistent with the doctrines of Sun Tzu and what was lost when they did not adopt such policies. For this reason, the 1862 campaigns constitute the most illuminating textbook we possess on the conduct of war. In that fateful year, when Davis and Lee refused the admonitions of Jackson, the destiny of the United States of America was determined.[2]

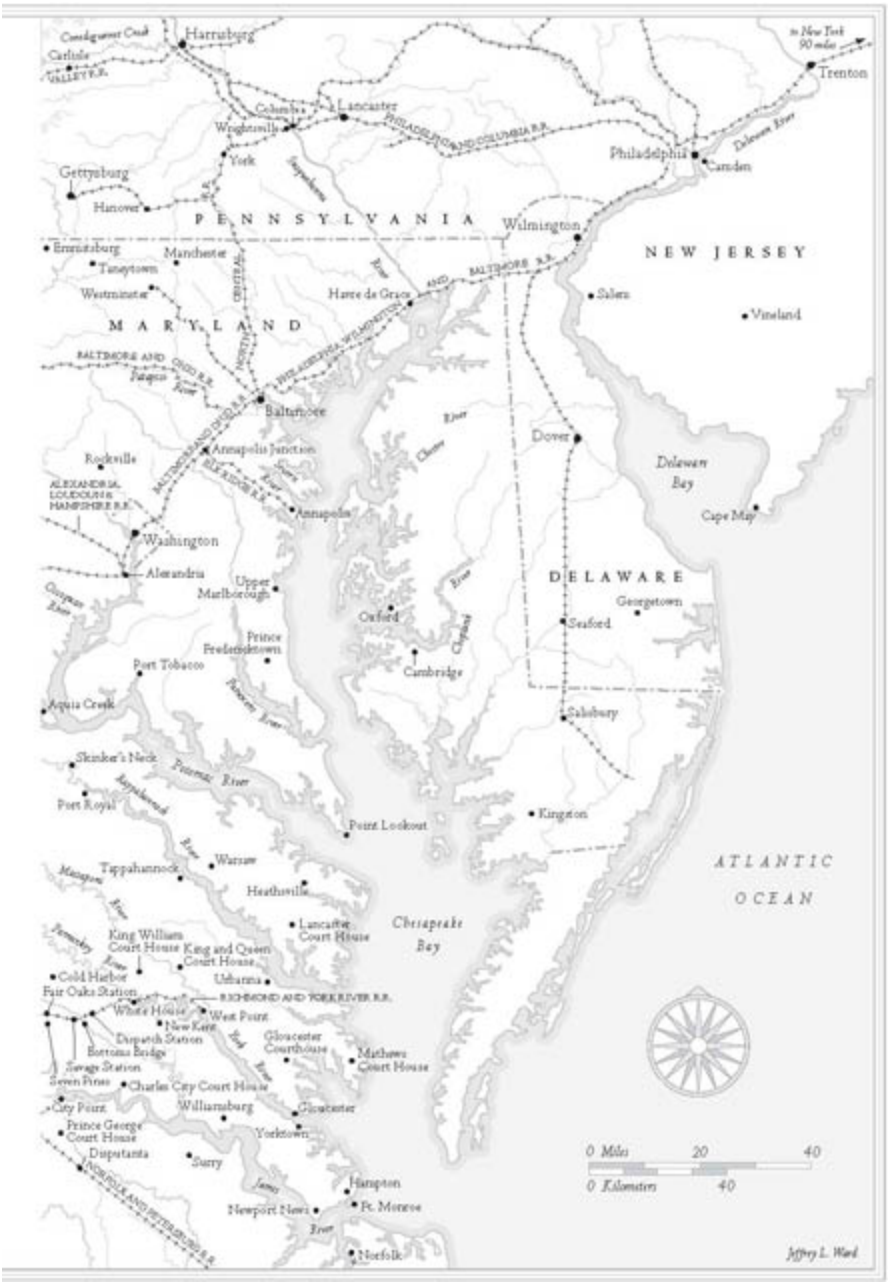
The year opened with a remarkable strategic situation. Since the Confederate victory at Manassas on July 21, 1861, the new Union commander, George B. McClellan, had been building an army around Washington. It now numbered nearly 240,000 men, including garrisons manning a series of forts he established encircling the capital. His field forces were well over twice the size of the Confederate army under Joseph E. Johnston around Fairfax in northern Virginia.

On March 13, 1862, McClellan got the approval of President Abraham Lincoln to carry out a dramatic campaign to capture the

Confederate capital of Richmond and to destroy the Confederate army in the east. McClellan took advantage of Union command of the sea to move about 100,000 Union soldiers by way of the Chesapeake Bay to Fort Monroe, a U.S. Army post at the tip of the peninsula between the York and the James rivers. Fort Monroe had never been surrendered and could form a base from which to advance up the peninsula to capture Richmond.

McClellan's initiative presented the Confederacy with a potentially disastrous situation. As his army moved up the peninsula, other Union forces were poised to descend on Richmond from the north and west. South of Harpers Ferry on the Potomac River, a 23,000-man army under General Nathaniel B. Banks was to dispose of a small army of 4,600 men under Stonewall Jackson at Winchester and then was to clear the whole Shenandoah Valley. From the Allegheny Mountains to the west, a 15,000-man army under General John C. Frémont was to advance on Staunton in the valley and from there drive eastward across the Blue Ridge to Charlottesville and on to Richmond. Meanwhile a 38,000-man corps under General Irvin McDowell around Alexandria was to march southward, first to Fredericksburg and then directly on Richmond. Between these forces the much weaker Confederate army was to be ground to dust and the rebellion crushed.[3]


Eastern Theater of War
1861–1865
PENNSYLVANIA
WEST VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA
Bedford
Chambersburg
Shippensburg
Cashtown
New Guilford
Mercersburg
Greencastle
Waynesboro
Cumberland
Hagerstown
Williamsport
Martinsburg
Boonsboro
Sharpsburg
Shepherdstown
Frederick
Harpers Ferry
Charles Town
Berlin
Kingwood
Oakland
Paddytown
Mount Carmel
Romney
Winchester
Berryville
Purcellville
Leesburg
Moorefield
Strasburg
Middletown
Middleburg
Centreville
Beverly
Front Royal
White Plains
Salem
Gainesville
Thoroughfare Gap
Fairfax Court House
Warrenton
Manassas Junction
Franklin
New Market
Luray
Sperryville
Amissville
Warrenton Junction
Harrisonburg
Culpeper
Madison Court House
Stafford Court House
Monterey
McDowell
Port Republic
Fredericksburg
Fort Defiance
Staunton
Stanardsville
Orange Court House
Chancellorsville
Spotsylvania Court House
Warm Springs
Stuarts Draft
Waynesboro
Gordonsville
Bowling Green
Charlottesville
Carter's Mt.
Green Mt.
Palmyra
Hanover Junction
Lexington
Scottsville
Lovingston
Findley's Mt.
Bremo Bluff
Columbia
Goochland Court House
Ashland
Hanover Court House
Clifton Forge
Natural Bridge
Amherst Court House
Mayo's Bridge
Maysville
Cumberland Court House
Powhatan Station
Mechanicsville
Buchanan
Lynchburg
Piney Mt.
Naked Mt.
Willis Mt.
Richmond
Bedford
Appomattox Court House
Chesterfield Court House
New London
Lady Mt.
Blue Mt.
Appomattox Station
Farmville
Amelia Court House
Chester
Petersburg
Jetersville
Salem
Burkeville
Meherrin
Nottoway
Blacks and Whites
Dunwiddie
Marysville
Keysville
In 1863 the Confederate government built this railroad from Lynchburg to Danville, Virginia, where it connected with Greensboro, North Carolina, and lines south and east.



Johnston's Army of Northern Virginia retreated to a more defensible position on the Rapidan River, north of Orange Court House and Gordonsville. As soon as McClellan's intentions were revealed, Johnston moved 57,000 men to Richmond, leaving only the 8,000-man division of Richard S. Ewell in the vicinity of Culpeper, north of Orange. Johnston sent 13,000 Confederates under General John B. Magruder to form a weak defensive line at Yorktown, a few miles up the peninsula from Fort Monroe.

Johnston's retreat forced Stonewall Jackson to withdraw southward, quickly followed by the advance of Banks and his army up the valley.[4]

The Confederacy was facing imminent dissolution. There was no force to stop the advance of McDowell directly on Richmond. Jackson's tiny army of 4,600 was considered to be entirely too small to do anything against Banks. And only a 2,800-man detachment under General Edward Johnson stood in the way of Frémont's army approaching Staunton from the Alleghenies.

Magruder, holding the flimsy line at Yorktown, presented the single tactical glimmer of hope. Celebrated in the old army for his amateur theatricals, he now put on a great show that deceived McClellan. He made blustering threats to attack, and marched the same Rebel unit time after time past a spot on a road under Union observation to give the impression of great strength, sending the unit around through the woods so it could repeatedly pass the open spot in the same direction.

McClellan, who could have broken the Yorktown line easily, instead settled down for a long siege. McClellan violated a fundamental rule of Sun Tzu because he did not determine the actual state of the enemy in front of him. It is imperative, Sun Tzu says, to ascertain the dispositions of the enemy. Otherwise, a commander is blind and cannot make reasonable decisions.[5]

There was one intellectual glimmer of hope visible to Stonewall Jackson, but it was not apparent to President Davis or to General Lee. Jackson saw that even though Union superiority of force was massive, the North suffered one weakness in its strategic plan. Abraham Lincoln possessed an exaggerated fear for the safety of Washington. Although McClellan had left a number of troops, as well as the circle of fortresses, around Washington, Lincoln felt insecure. The vast bulk of the Union army was on the peninsula and could not come to the aid of the capital if a Confederate force struck. To McClellan, such a fear was groundless. The fortresses alone could contain any likely attack. Far more important, he was confident that every Confederate soldier would be committed to protecting Richmond, not raiding Washington.

At this moment Stonewall Jackson emerged as a great general. A great general can see a situation as a whole, not merely his own circumstances.

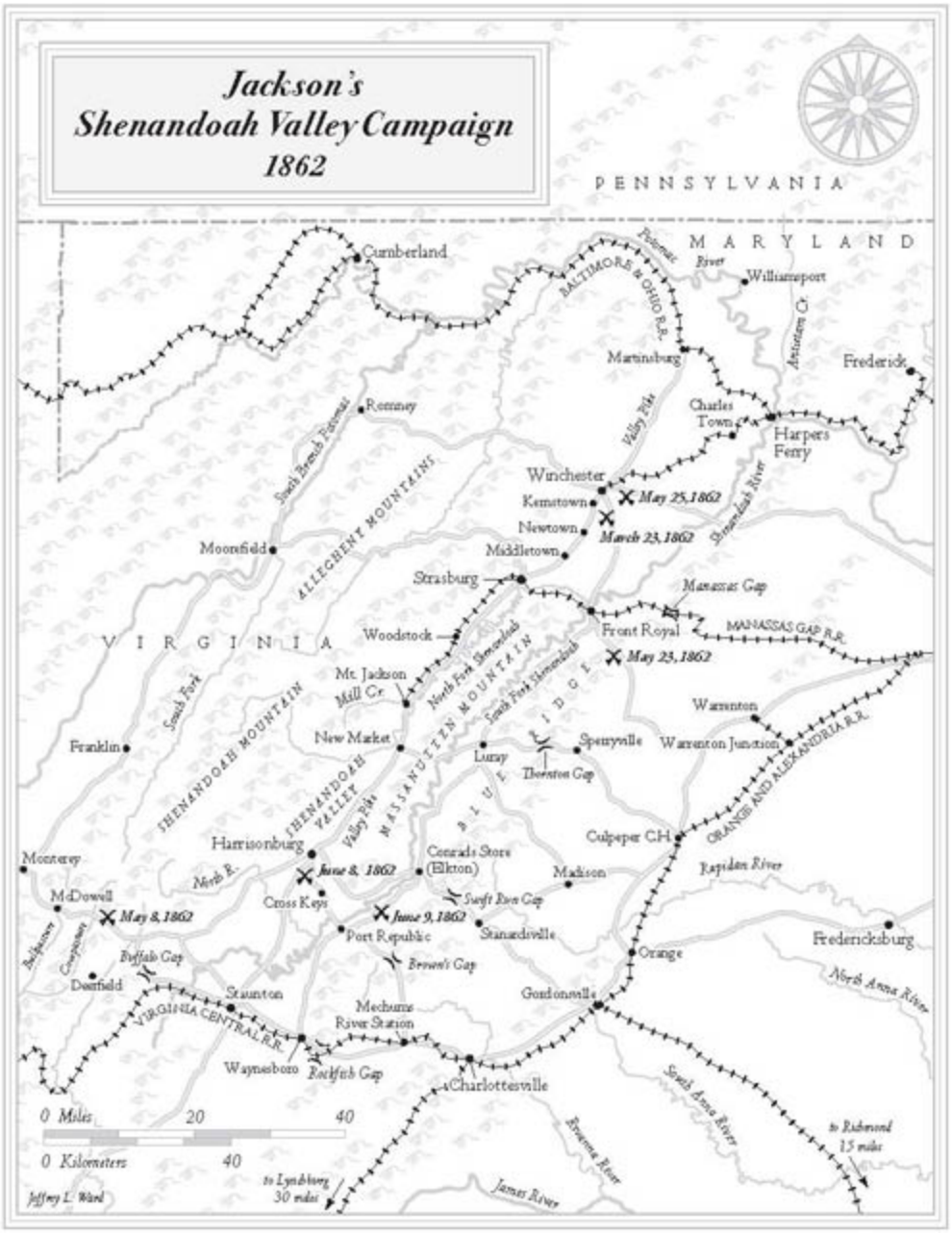
Sun Tzu says that “the highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy’s plans.”[6] Jackson, looking at the entire eastern theater of war, saw that anything he could do in the Shenandoah Valley or elsewhere to raise Lincoln’s anxiety about Washington would reduce the Union forces pressing on Richmond. But his military superiors only partially recognized this opening.

A golden opportunity emerged on March 21, 1862. When General Banks arrived in Winchester and discovered how tiny Jackson’s army was, he got permission to leave 9,000 men in the valley under James Shields, and began to move the remainder of his army east toward Manassas. Banks’s new orders were to protect Washington and the line of the Potomac. Once McClellan was secure on the peninsula, he was to seize Warrenton, on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad southwest of Manassas, and reopen the Manassas Gap Railroad from Manassas to Strasburg to ensure supplies for Union forces that remained in the valley.

Jackson’s cavalry chief Turner Ashby had been monitoring the withdrawal of Union forces, and he reported that all of Banks’s army except for four of Shields’s regiments had departed.

Jackson set his little army in motion at once. The pace of Jackson’s marches was already legendary. His men called themselves the “foot cavalry.” But this time, Jackson outdid even himself. He marched so fast that only 3,000 of his men remained in ranks at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 23, when he came up on Ashby, who was skirmishing with Federal artillery at Kernstown, four miles south of Winchester.[7] Ashby assured Jackson that the force visible to the east of the Valley Pike (present-day U.S. Route 11) was a rear guard. The rest of Shields’s division, he said, had already left the valley.

While Ashby continued to demonstrate with his artillery, Jackson moved the bulk of his force three miles to his left, or west, up a long, low wooded hill called Sandy Ridge, hoping to get on the flank of the Union troops and evict them from their position.



But Ashby had been wrong. Shields's entire division of 9,000 men was hidden north of Kernstown. The force was under the temporary command of Colonel Nathan Kimball since Shields had been wounded. Kimball sent two brigades onto Sandy Ridge to stop Jackson. Realizing he was facing a much larger force than his own, Jackson ordered his last three regiments to come forward. But before they could arrive, the commander of his Stonewall Brigade, Richard B. Garnett, fearing his line was about to break, ordered withdrawal.

Jackson tried to stem the frenzied retreat. But when a force has to withdraw under pressure, the retreat usually turns into a rout. This happened to Jackson's men. They fled several miles southward, having lost 718 men, compared to the Federals' loss of 590. Nearly one-fourth of his infantry had fallen or been captured.

Jackson relieved Garnett of his command for withdrawing without orders. But the Federals regarded the encounter at Kernstown as anything but a Confederate defeat. Lincoln concluded that Jackson would not have attacked unless he had been greatly reinforced. Accordingly, Lincoln ordered Banks's entire army back into the valley, and he directed that a 10,000-man division under Louis Blenker, scheduled to move to McClellan on the peninsula, be diverted to Frémont's army in the Alleghenies. Even more significant, he ordered Irvin McDowell's 38,000-man corps to remain in the vicinity of Alexandria. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton instructed McDowell, "You will consider the national capital as especially under your protection and make no movement throwing your force out of position for the discharge of this primary duty."[8]

Thus, Banks was returned to challenge Jackson, and 48,000 Union troops who might have been used to defeat the Confederates at Richmond were diverted to other purposes. Rarely in history has so small a force brought about such a massive strategic dislocation.

The denial of McDowell's corps had a paralyzing effect on McClellan. Hesitant to a fault under the best of conditions, he complained bitterly to Lincoln. Exasperated, the president replied that McClellan had 100,000 men and said, "You must act."[9] But McClellan did not act. He continued to wait for McDowell. Thus Jackson's blow at Kernstown gave the Confederate leaders time to devise a strategy to prevent disaster. But the question was, would they seize the opportunity?

Stonewall Jackson withdrew southward up the Shenandoah Valley, hoping to find an opportunity to strike at Banks. But the Federal commander moved slowly to Woodstock, about thirty miles south of Winchester. The huge agricultural resources of the valley were vital to the Confederacy, and to preserve them Jackson had to keep Staunton from being captured. The town was on the Virginia Central Railroad, which ran from Richmond to Clifton Forge. If Frémont and Banks met at Staunton, the

valley would be lost, and the two forces would have an open road to Charlottesville and Richmond.

Jackson had increased his little “Army of the Shenandoah” to 6,000 men through recruitment. And President Davis and General Lee had told Jackson he could use Richard Ewell’s 8,000-man division, if necessary. This force, plus Edward Johnson’s small detachment at Staunton, raised Jackson’s total numbers to about 17,000, or well less than half the number of men in the combined Union armies converging on the valley.

Under pressure from Washington, Banks finally pushed up the macadamized Valley Pike to New Market on April 17, forcing Jackson back to Harrisonburg, eighteen miles to the south and twenty-five miles north of Staunton. Banks’s advance to New Market opened up a strategic opportunity for Jackson that changed everything. Set down in the midst of the Shenandoah Valley is a high massif known as Massanutten Mountain, running forty-five miles north and south. It had exactly one road crossing over it, from New Market in the broad main valley to Luray in the narrow Page or Luray Valley, squeezed between Massanutten and the sharply rising Blue Ridge to the east. Down this valley runs the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. The South Fork meets the North Fork at Front Royal, the northern terminus of Massanutten, and from there the Shenandoah flows as one stream to the Potomac at Harpers Ferry.

On April 19, Jackson abruptly moved his army from Harrisonburg eastward just below the southern escarpment or face of Massanutten to Conrad’s Store (now Elkton). Leaving a detachment to guard the bridge over the South Fork there, Jackson bivouacked his army in Elk Run Valley at the foot of Swift Run Gap, in the Blue Ridge east of Conrad’s Store.

Ewell now had guaranteed access to the Shenandoah Valley. Jackson sent young Henry Kyd Douglas, a member of his staff, across the Blue Ridge to find Ewell and alert him.

To all appearances, Jackson’s withdrawal from the main valley had opened the way for Banks to march straight up the Valley Pike to Staunton and join with Frémont, whose only opposition was Edward Johnson’s tiny force. But Jackson had actually locked Banks in place. When Banks looked at his map, he saw that if he moved on Staunton, Jackson could march north from Conrad’s Store to Luray, turn onto the one road over Massanutten Mountain, and emerge at New Market. There, Jackson would cut Banks’s

line of supply and route of retreat. If Banks struck out for Staunton, he would fall into a trap and could lose his entire army. Jackson's positioning, by taking spectacular advantage of the terrain, exemplifies one of Sun Tzu's maxims.[10]

Jackson had dealt with Banks, but he still had to confront Frémont. His advanced brigade had reached Monterey and was getting ready to march the thirty-five miles to Staunton. General Joe Johnston's orders had obligated Jackson to remain close to the railway, so he could move to help defend Richmond if McClellan broke through the lines at York-

town. General Johnston saw Jackson's force only as a source of potential reinforcements. But Robert E. Lee had a wider vision. On April 21, Lee wired Jackson: "If you can use General Ewell's division in an attack on Banks, it will prove a great relief to the pressure on Fredericksburg [where Lincoln, no longer anxious about Jackson, had allowed McDowell to move preparatory to a march on Richmond]."[11]

This message liberated Jackson.12 He embarked on one of the most mystifying moves in military history. On April 30, he called on Ewell to move at once to Elk Run Valley and to remain there unless Banks marched on Staunton. Jackson told Turner Ashby merely to "feel out" the Federals toward Harrisonburg. When Ewell arrived at Elk Run Valley, Jackson and his little army had vanished, no one knew where. The people of Staunton, with Frémont descending on them, were baffled and dismayed.

On Saturday, May 3, worse news came: Jackson's army was crossing the Blue Ridge at Brown's Gap, southeast of Port Republic, and he was abandoning the valley to the enemy. The people of Staunton were now plunged into despair.

When General Banks received the report that Jackson was in retreat, he wired Secretary of War Stanton that he was certain "Jackson is bound for Richmond."[13] Banks suggested that he depart the valley, cross the Blue Ridge, and clear the whole country north of Charlottesville.

But Jackson's disappearance aroused a totally different concern in Stanton's mind. Jackson might be "bound for Richmond," but he also might be heading for Fredericksburg to challenge McDowell. Stanton wired McDowell not to move until Jackson's intentions were better known.

Stanton then ordered Banks to send James Shields's division to McDowell as a precaution. Banks's army was thus nearly cut in half.

By disappearing, Jackson placed a new brake on McDowell, and McDowell's halt kept McClellan from moving. Jackson, by a distant, indirect maneuver, once more had blocked the North from taking action.

On May 4, Jackson emerged at Mechums River Station on the Virginia Central Railroad, about nine miles west of Charlottesville. Trains were waiting, and the soldiers were sure they were headed to either Richmond or Fredericksburg. But when the trains started off, they steamed west to Staunton. In a matter of hours, Jackson landed

in the central position between the two Federal armies! It was precisely the kind of advance that Napoléon had planned to seize Quatre-Bras in the Waterloo campaign of 1815. If Jackson had advanced directly on Staunton from Elk Run Valley, he would have given away his intention, and Frémont and Banks could have crushed his army between them. But Jackson had moved so secretly that both Federal armies remained inactive and far apart, and neither commander could do a thing to counter him.

Jackson joined with Edward Johnson and marched into the Alleghenies to confront Frémont's advance unit. Frémont had weakened his own situation by allowing his 25,000-man army to spread out in four segments down the South Branch of the Potomac River. Accordingly, on May 8, Jackson confronted only 4,000 Federal troops at the little village of McDowell, twenty-seven miles west of Staunton.

The commanders, Robert C. Schenck and Robert H. Milroy, had worsened their situation by setting up their defenses in the village, which lay in a deep hollow surrounded by high mountains. All Jackson had to do to dislodge them was to move on their rear. He made preparations to do so. Meanwhile, some of Jackson's soldiers occupied steep Sitlington's Hill, overlooking the village on the east. Milroy concluded that Jackson was moving cannons atop the hill to bombard the village. This was not true, but Milroy convinced Schenck that the Federals should attack the hill. It was a senseless move. But that was how the unnecessary battle of McDowell was fought. The attacks failed, and at the end of the day, Milroy and Schenck realized they were in a trap and hastily abandoned the village.

Jackson pressed after the fleeing Federals, but he wasn't interested in catching them. He wanted merely to drive Frémont far back in the

mountains so that he could not join Banks or capture Staunton. This done, Jackson returned to the Shenandoah Valley to deal with Banks.

Meanwhile McClellan had finally broken through the flimsy Confederate line at Yorktown and had moved to within twenty miles of Richmond. The South had abandoned Norfolk and scuttled its sole ironclad, the Virginia (generally known by its original name, the Merrimac). It had too deep a draught to move up the James River, which Union gunboats now ascended to reach Drewry's Bluff, six miles below Richmond, where Confederate batteries barred passage.

The Confederate capital was now in a desperate situation. Military stores were removed and archives packed and ready to go. Robert E. Lee wrote Jackson on May 16: "Whatever movement you make against Banks, do it speedily, and if successful drive him back towards the Potomac, and create the impression, as far as possible, that you design threatening that line."[14]

Jackson was already moving to do just that. Banks had withdrawn northward to Strasburg, where he posted 7,400 of his men to build strong entrenchments facing the Valley Pike, down which he expected the Confederates to attack. Banks placed 1,000 of his men at Front Royal, ten miles east of Strasburg, to guard the Manassas Gap Railroad.

General Johnston wired Jackson to release Ewell to reinforce the defense of Richmond. Jackson wired back that he needed Ewell to deal with Banks. Johnston responded that Banks should be left "in his works," and that Ewell should come east.

Attacking Banks "in his works" was not in the least what Jackson had in mind. He telegraphed Lee: "I am of opinion that an attempt should be made to defeat Banks, but under instructions from General Johnston I do not feel at liberty to make an attack. Please answer by telegraph at once."[15] Lee responded authorizing Ewell to remain in the valley.

To give Banks's spies the impression that he was massing his forces to march down the Valley Pike to Strasburg, Jackson directed Ewell to send his Louisiana Brigade from Conrad's Store around the base of Massanutten Mountain to New Market. Meanwhile, Jackson's force moved onto the Valley Pike and marched to New Market.

On the morning of May 21, the men moved north through New Market expecting to march directly on Strasburg. Just at the edge of the village, however, Jackson quietly turned the head of the column to the right—up the long, sloping road (present-day U.S. Route 211) leading over Massanutten Mountain to Luray. The Rebel army had turned completely away from Banks and was marching eastward.

Sun Tzu would have recognized the move at once. It was a classic expression of his principal military movement, his combination of a *zheng*, an ordinary or direct force, and a *qi*, an extraordinary or indirect force. The infantry didn't know it, but Jackson had already applied his *zheng* force by directing his cavalry under Turner Ashby to drive straight north down the Valley Pike, giving the impression that it represented the advance elements of Jackson's whole army marching on Banks's "works." By this means, Jackson held Banks in his position at Strasburg. The qi force meanwhile marched over Massanutten Mountain. It emerged hours later at Luray, where the remainder of Ewell's division was waiting. In one swift move, Jackson had consolidated all of his infantry and guns, and they now descended as one body on the isolated and hopelessly outnumbered Union outpost at Front Royal.

Jackson's move was utterly unanticipated by the Federals. In numerous telegrams back and forth, the field commanders and Lincoln and Stanton kept reassuring themselves that things were going splendidly. The Confederates had not followed up on the attack on Frémont. Banks felt fully secure behind his fortifications at Strasburg. McClellan was boasting of imminent success. McDowell had already crossed the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg with a portion of his troops and was beginning to move to Richmond. Lincoln and Stanton, expecting the forthcoming fall of Richmond, were to leave for Fredericksburg the next day.

On the morning of May 23, Confederate troops stormed Front Royal, where Federals were guarding the wooden railroad viaduct and bridges over the Shenandoah River. The fight was one-sided, and all but a few of the 1,000-man garrison were killed or captured. Jackson was now as close to Banks's rear base at Winchester as was Banks himself. But Banks was strangely unmoved. He concluded it was only a cavalry raid. Even when presented with the facts, he was unwilling to admit that he had been fooled. Only around 10:00 a.m. on May 24 did he finally realize that he was in a

trap, and at last ordered an immediate withdrawal from Strasburg to Winchester, abandoning a mountain of supplies.

In the race that followed, most of Banks's infantry got away to Winchester on the hard Valley Pike, but numbers of cavalry had to escape by small roads westward and were of no use in defending Winchester. At Winchester, Banks's situation was desperate. He had no more than 7,500 discouraged men. Jackson had about 16,000 gleeful soldiers invigorated by success.

Although the Federals put up a stout defense on May 25, they were quickly overwhelmed, and the entire army fled northward. The Confederates captured 3,000 men and might have captured more except that Turner Ashby's cavalry had moved eastward without orders and was not available to pursue the fugitives.

Even so, Banks's army had been driven in panic to the Potomac River. The news created consternation throughout the North. Abraham Lincoln feared that Jackson might capture Washington. Seasoned generals like McDowell told Lincoln this was not possible. Jackson's army was much smaller than the combined forces around Washington, and he would not be able to mount an offensive unless he was reinforced.

Slightly mollified, Lincoln decided to become a military strategist himself and trap Jackson in the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley. He wired McDowell to stop his advance on Richmond and to send forces to seal off Jackson's retreat at Strasburg. He ordered Frémont to assist from the west. Here Lincoln made a fearsome error. McDowell at Fredericksburg was in the central position between Jackson and Joe Johnston. If McDowell moved to Richmond, he could join McClellan and probably force Johnston's army to surrender. Jackson's small army would then be isolated in the Shenandoah Valley and could be destroyed at leisure.

McDowell saw this, but Lincoln did not. He remained focused on the danger of Jackson, and not on the opportunity that was available at Richmond. Accordingly, McDowell turned Shields's division, followed by other forces, toward Strasburg. Once more Jackson's indirect move had stopped McClellan in his tracks.

At this point Stonewall Jackson made a concerted effort to change Southern strategy and to prevent a collision of Confederate forces with McClellan's army at Richmond.

From the start of the war, President Davis had been pursuing a policy of passive defense. He held that the South was only defending itself against aggression. In his view, all it had to do was to fend off Northern attacks until the Northern people became weary, or Britain and France intervened to protect their textile industries, which depended on Southern cotton. It is always a mistake to rely on the anticipated actions of other people to achieve one's goals. For the South, this was especially unwise. Abraham Lincoln and the Radical Republicans were bent on invading the South and beating down resistance by main force. British and French politicians were unwilling to incite the ire of their own textile workers, who were very poorly paid, to support the South, whose cotton field slave workers were not paid at all.

The war was going to be won or lost entirely by the South. And it could not win by main strength. Its only hope was to develop a strategy that could neutralize the North's vastly superior resources.

The North, confident of its power, had developed no plans to counter a possible invasion. Lincoln, to be sure, was constantly afraid of a Southern strike against Washington, but strategically this made no sense whatsoever. Any direct blow would run up against the ring of fortresses that McClellan had built. These would slow a decision until the North's material ascendancy could be brought to bear.

Stonewall Jackson saw from the outset that the key to the outcome was not the capture of Washington, but the will of the Northern people to pursue the war,. The resolve of the North could be attacked by destroying its factories, railroads, farms, and commerce. Washington need not even be approached. It could be captured *indirectly* by severing the single rail corridor that reached the city from the north—the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Cutting this line would deprive the capital of food and other supplies and would force the Republican administration to evacuate the city.

The giant flaw in the North's strategy was that it had nothing to protect its interior. The vast bulk of its military forces were pressing into the South. They would be unavailable in the event that a Southern army invaded the North. Jackson saw this very clearly. He had already proved in

the Shenandoah Valley that he could march rings around Northern armies. He was confident he could do the same in the North, where there were few Union forces of any consequence. Jackson's plan illustrates the most important advice that Sun Tzu gives about warfare: neutralize the enemy's strategy.[16]

Jackson had already proposed an alternative to Davis's passive defense. In mid-October 1861 he had approached Gustavus W. Smith, a division commander in the Army of Northern Virginia, and asked Smith to help him to convince Davis to develop a new policy. Smith was unable to do so, and Davis ignored the idea.

This original proposal embodied all of the ideas that would have nullified Northern strength and given the South victory. Jackson told Smith, "McClellan, with his army of recruits, will not attempt to come out against us this autumn. If we remain inactive, they will have greatly the advantage over us next spring. Their raw recruits will have become an organized army, vastly superior in numbers to our own. We are ready at the present moment for active operations in the field, while they are not. We ought to invade their country now, and not wait for them to make the necessary preparations to invade ours. If the president would reinforce this army by taking troops from other points not threatened, and let us make an active campaign of invasion before winter sets in, McClellan's raw recruits could not stand against us in the field.

"Crossing the upper Potomac, occupying Baltimore, and taking possession of Maryland, we could cut off the communications of Washington, force the Federal government to abandon the capital, beat McClellan's army if it came out against us in the open country, destroy industrial establishments wherever we found them, break up the lines of interior commercial intercourse, close the coal mines, seize and, if necessary, destroy the manufactories and commerce of Philadelphia and of other large cities within our reach, take and hold the narrow neck of country between Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, subsist mainly on the country we traverse, and making unrelenting war amidst their homes, force the people of the North to understand what it will cost them to hold the South in the Union at the bayonet's point."[17]

Jackson's proposal was an eloquent expression of one of Sun Tzu's most important axioms: "Attaining one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the pinnacle of excellence," Sun Tzu says. "Subjugating the enemy's army without fighting is the true pinnacle of excellence."[18]

On May 30, 1862, while watching skirmishers firing at Harpers Ferry, Stonewall Jackson presented his plan once more. He asked an old friend, Colonel Alexander R. Boteler, a former congressman, to carry the proposal to President Davis, whom he knew well, and to General Lee. If his command was increased to a total of 40,000 men, Jackson told Boteler, he would cross into Maryland, "raise the siege of Richmond and transfer this campaign from the banks of the Potomac to those of the Susquehanna."[19]

The concept was even more feasible now than it had been in the fall of 1861, because McClellan had isolated on the peninsula between the York and the James rivers the largest Union army—the only force that could defeat Jackson. Even if Lincoln ordered it to move at once, it would take two weeks at least, probably much longer, to assemble a superior army in Maryland.

Although there were more than 60,000 troops arrayed against Jackson at the moment, they were scattered. Jackson expected to slip through the trap Lincoln was trying to set at Strasburg and to withdraw south far up the Shenandoah Valley. From there, if he got the reinforcements he was asking for, he could burst through or go around any Union forces still in the valley, cross the Potomac, and have almost free rein until McClellan extricated his army from the peninsula and came to confront him. By then, Jackson felt, it would be too late.

If Jackson's plan was adopted, the North would be in an almost impossible dilemma. The combination of McClellan's extreme slowness and Jackson's extreme speed indicated that even if McClellan managed to assemble an army in Maryland or Pennsylvania, Jackson could outmaneuver him, defeat isolated parts of his army, and halt the Northern war effort. At the very least a drive into the North would terminate the siege of Richmond without a single additional Southern soldier being sacrificed. It would throw the North onto the strategic defensive. It might win the war in a matter of weeks.

Jackson and Boteler took the train back to Winchester, where Jackson got together papers explaining his proposal, and Boteler set off to see Davis.

Meanwhile, on May 31 to June 1, Joe Johnston was attacking McClellan immediately east of Richmond. The event, known as the battle of Seven Pines in the South and the battle of Fair Oaks in the North, demonstrated persuasively that Johnston did not know how to conduct a battle. His performance was so poor that the projected major strike by James Longstreet's division on the right, or northern, flank of two Union corps lined up facing Richmond did not land at all. Instead, Longstreet came in behind D. H. Hill's division two miles south and merely blocked other Confederate troops from going into action. D. H. Hill, left unsupported, crashed headlong into the defending Federal troops on Williamsburg Road (present-day U.S. Route 60), suffered fearsome casualties, and achieved nothing. Johnston himself sustained two wounds that were not fatal but put him out of action for six months. At the end of the engagement President Davis realized that Johnston was an inadequate commander. Though reluctant to lose his right-hand man, he appointed Robert E. Lee commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee thus became its final chieftain.[20]

Jackson was not in the least perturbed about Lincoln's plans to block him at Strasburg. Converging two armies on a single point from two different directions is one of the most difficult tasks in warfare. The ordinary general sees a trap waiting to be sprung at every crossroad. Each general is ignorant of the other's movements and intentions. This uncertainty causes commanders to become timid and hesitant. These ordinary fears were doubled and redoubled in the minds of Frémont and Shields, for they were trying to cage a general who already had shown astonishing speed and bewildering movements.

Accordingly, Shields reached Front Royal, but he was afraid to advance ten miles farther to Strasburg. Frémont likewise stopped at Cedar Creek, six miles west of Strasburg, where he did nothing but demonstrate against Ewell's division. Jackson's army streamed unmolested through Strasburg and headed southward on June 1.

Frémont pursued the Confederates south up the Valley Pike, while Shields moved up the Luray Valley, hoping to get behind Jackson's army, either at New Market or at Harrisonburg. But Jackson had already dispatched cavalry to burn the two bridges over the South Fork of the Shenandoah River at Luray and the single bridge at Conrad's Store. This kept Shields east of the South Fork and completely separated from Frémont.

Jackson pulled his army back to Port Republic, where another of his cavalry teams had secured the last remaining bridge over the river. Now Jackson was once more in the central position, this time between Shields on the east and Frémont on the west. Since Jackson held the only bridge, neither could help the other.

On June 8, 1862, Frémont came up against Ewell's division at Cross Keys, five miles west of Port Republic. Frémont's actions were weak and tentative, and he backed off entirely when the brigade of Isaac R. Trimble swung around his left flank. The next day Jackson sent two brigades of Shields's division flying in a tightly contested battle at Port Republic.

That was the end of the Shenandoah Valley campaign. Jackson marched his army to safety into the lower cove of Brown's Gap in the Blue Ridge. On June 10, Shields withdrew to Luray, while Frémont retreated hastily to Harrisonburg and, ultimately, all the way to Middletown, ten miles south of Winchester. Jackson, left alone and unmolested, brought his men down from the Blue Ridge on June 12, pitched camp below Port Republic, and gave them a much-needed five-day rest.

Shortly before he arrived at Port Republic, Jackson received a bare message from President Davis regretting that he could not send additional troops for the proposed offensive into the North. Jackson was disappointed, but he didn't give up. The day after he brought his army down from the Blue Ridge, he called in Colonel Boteler again and asked him to take a letter to General Lee to explain his plan and to solicit troops. Jackson was deeply opposed to a headlong battle with McClellan. If he could strike into the North, he told Boteler, "Richmond can be relieved and the campaign transferred to Pennsylvania."

Boteler got nowhere when he presented Jackson's plan to Lee. "Colonel," Lee said, "don't you think General Jackson had better come down here first and help me to drive these troublesome people away from before Richmond?" When Lee sent Jackson's proposal to President Davis,

he wrote, “I think the sooner Jackson can move this way [toward Richmond] the better—The first object now is to defeat McClellan.”[21] Davis agreed.

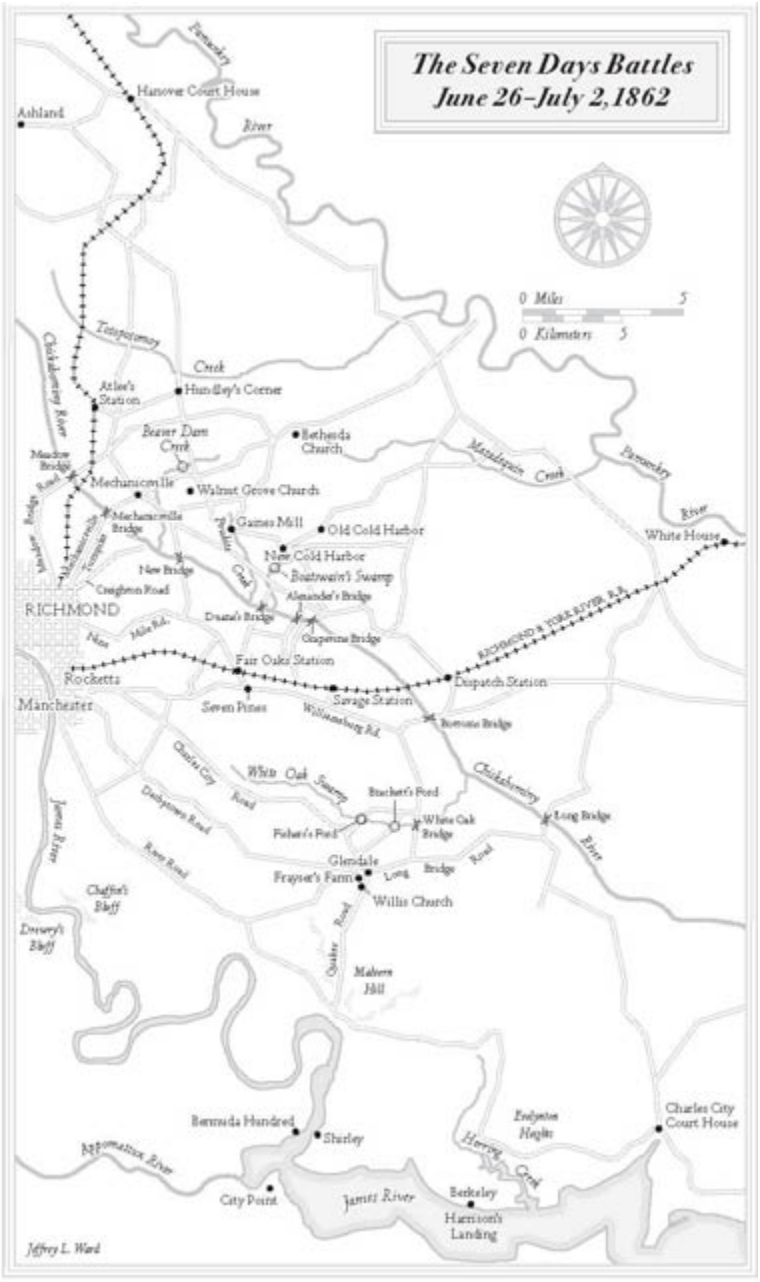
So Lee and Davis possessed an entirely different view than Jackson. Jackson wanted to *pull* the Union away from Richmond by posing a vastly greater danger to the North—invasion of its cities, and breakup of its economy—that would force McClellan to withdraw. Jackson was proposing a plan consistent with one of Sun Tzu’s fundamental axioms: the way to avoid what is strong is to strike what is weak.[22] Union strength was McClellan’s army massed at Richmond. Union weakness was the undefended Northern population, industry, railroads, and farms. Lee, with Davis’s approval, intended to do precisely the opposite of what Jackson proposed. He wanted to *drive* McClellan’s army back by main force. While Jackson pressed for an indirect approach, Lee believed that destruction of the enemy’s army by direct, headlong attack was the best strategy.

When Jackson got the news, he made no comment. Leaving his cavalry to guard the Shenandoah Valley, he secretly set his army in motion for Richmond.

Military command structure requires subordinates to present all of their proposals for action to their superiors. Since the first of June 1862, Stonewall Jackson, through his emissary Colonel Boteler, had been trying to get President Davis and General Lee to listen to his proposals to transfer the war to Maryland and Pennsylvania and entirely avoid a collision with McClellan. But he had failed. The minds of Davis and Lee were fixated on the Army of the Potomac at the gates of Richmond. They could see nothing else.

Accordingly, the battles of the Seven Days, which followed, were fought precisely as Lee wished. He concentrated the Confederacy’s power and confronted the enemy’s strength directly. The operation started on June 26, 1862, with an attack on Fitz John Porter’s Union corps located north of the Chickahominy River. Five battles of headlong assault followed. A. P. Hill’s division, aided by D. H. Hill’s division, attacked Union fortifications along Beaver Dam Creek just east of the village of Mechanicsville. The attack failed, but Porter withdrew to new positions along Boatswain’s

Swamp, about four miles east. This battle, known as Gaines Mill, finally succeeded in driving Porter across the Chickahominy, but with appalling losses. Next, a direct attack at Savage Station got nowhere, but McClellan was retreating to Harrison's Landing on the James River, twenty-five miles southeast of Richmond, so his forces withdrew. Then came another direct attack at Frayser's Farm at Glendale. This attack also failed. Finally Lee launched a frontal assault against the massed strength of the Union army at Malvern Hill, on July 1. This attack failed as well. McClellan was able to withdraw with impunity to Harrison's Landing, where he could not be dislodged.



Only one of Lee's direct assaults succeeded. The Seven Days cost the Confederacy 20,000 men, nearly all killed or wounded. This was one-quarter of Lee's entire army. McClellan lost 8,800 men, killed or wounded, plus 6,000 more who were captured. Since prisoners of war were routinely exchanged, the real Federal cost was less than half that sustained by the Confederates. With losses like this, the South, with a third the population of the North, was bound to lose.

In the Seven Days battles, General Lee established the pattern that he was to follow throughout the war. On the offensive, he wanted to attack the enemy in front of him. Indirection was meaningless to him. Lee was possessed with the idea of direct assault.

Lee's methods represented a profound violation of Sun Tzu's principles and a repudiation of Napoléon Bonaparte, who said, "A well-established maxim of war is not to do anything which your enemy wishes—and for the single reason that he does so wish. You should therefore avoid a field of battle which he has reconnoitered and studied. You should be still more careful to avoid one which he has fortified and where he has entrenched himself. A corollary of this principle is, never to attack in front a position which admits of being turned."[23] Instead of charging directly into enemy strength, as Lee did, the English strategist Basil H. Liddell Hart said that the goal of the general should be the same as that of Paris in the Trojan War of Greek legend. Paris avoided any obvious target on the foremost Greek champion Achilles, but instead aimed his arrow at Achilles' only vulnerable point, his heel.[24]

Jackson had been deeply troubled by Lee's methods in the Seven Days. On July 7, 1862, he called on his old friend, Alexander Boteler, to make one more plea to President Davis to invade the North. The South was far too weak in manpower to overwhelm the Union army by sheer power, he said. The only solution was to avoid the enemy's strength and force the Northern people, faced with destruction of their property, to accept peace. Jackson pointed out that McClellan's army would pose no danger until it was reorganized and reinforced. The South should concentrate 60,000 men and march into Maryland.

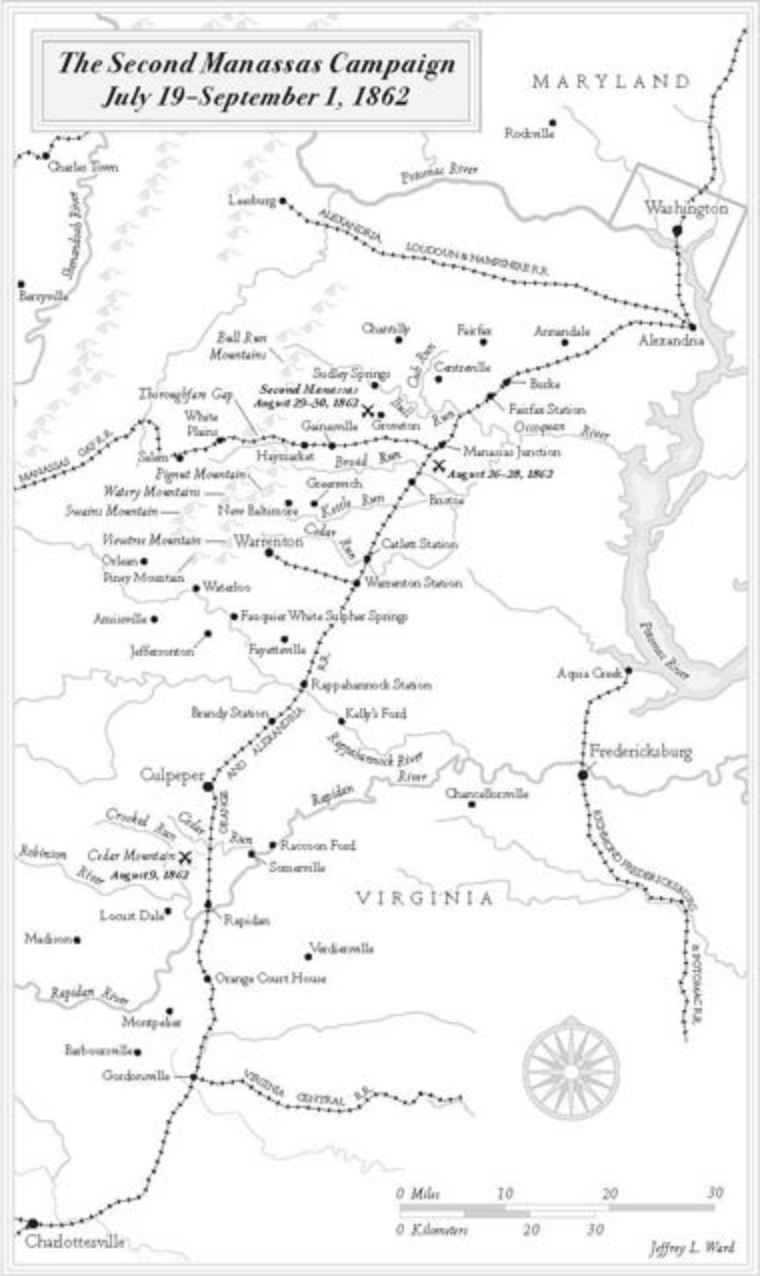
But once more President Davis rejected the idea. Jackson at last realized that Davis would never accept the strategy, nor would Lee.

Abraham Lincoln called an officer from the western theater, Henry Wager Halleck, and consolidated all Union forces under his direction. He also called another officer from the west, John Pope, to form a new "Army of Virginia" of 60,000 men out of various separate commands spread across the map. While George McClellan threatened Richmond with 90,000 men at Harrison's Landing, Lincoln instructed Pope to march on Richmond by

way of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad, thus approaching the Confederate capital from the west.

Pope's cavalry occupied Culpeper Court House, only twenty-seven miles north of Gordonsville, on July 12, 1862. Lee sent Jackson with 12,000 men, soon raised to 24,000, to block him. Gordonsville was on the Virginia Central Railroad. Its loss would sever connections with the Shenandoah Valley and must be prevented at all costs.

Pope was having difficulty consolidating the various elements of his new command, and Jackson saw a chance to shatter parts of it. On August 9, he collided with Banks's isolated corps at Cedar Mountain, about seven miles south of Culpeper. When Banks attacked, Jackson sent the corps flying. But other Union forces arrived to reinforce Banks, and Jackson withdrew to the Rapidan River, just north of Orange.



When McClellan found that Jackson had advanced to Gordonsville, his proper move would have been to attack Lee's weakened army at Richmond. But Jackson had been right. McClellan was not going to move on his own volition. Halleck and Lincoln concluded that McClellan's army should be evacuated from Harrison's Landing and brought back to Washington, or sent to reinforce Pope in central Virginia. Strategically this was a senseless move, because the Union abandoned a highly advantageous

position within striking distance of Richmond. The decision allowed Lee to move with most of the Confederate army to join Jackson.

On August 15, Lee met with Jackson and James Longstreet. Jackson already had a plan. One of Sun Tzu's principles is to find out the enemy's dispositions and, using them, to make his own plans. Jackson, on his own, reached the same conclusion now. When Pope stopped at the Rapidan River, he had massed his army on the Gordonsville-Culpeper road (present-day U.S. Route 15). Pope was convinced that if Jackson advanced, he would come up the road to Culpeper. Pope had left entirely unguarded fords to the east over the Rapidan. His failure to take this elementary precaution flew in the face of Sun Tzu's maxims and of common sense. Sun Tzu says that a general should never rely on chance but should ascertain the enemy's capabilities and correct his own weaknesses. This will prevent the enemy from mounting a surprise attack.[25]

Jackson told Lee that by crossing Somerville Ford (on present-day U.S. Route 522) and Raccoon Ford, two miles farther east, the Confederates could sweep around Pope's left, cut his supplies and stop any troops coming to help, drive his now-isolated force against the Rapidan or against the mountains to the west, and either destroy it or force it to surrender. This was precisely the sort of sweep that Jackson had made around Banks's army at Strasburg, and it could have been even more devastating because the Confederates could quickly imperil Pope's army by severing the Orange & Alexandria Railroad.

Lee accepted Jackson's proposal, but—without telling Jackson—he didn't accept crucial aspects of it. Jackson wanted the Confederates to cross the fords the next night, August 16. Longstreet, however, insisted on more time to accumulate food. Jackson offered to give Longstreet enough biscuits for the march, but Lee delayed the approach to the fords to August 17 and the sweep around Pope until August 18. To Jackson, it was imperative to move quickly before Pope learned of the movement.

Then Lee postponed the attack again. Longstreet still didn't have enough biscuits, and Lee's cavalry chief, J. E. B. (Jeb) Stuart, had not, as ordered, burned the railroad bridge at Rappahannock Station. In fact, Lee was not thinking of driving Pope's army against the Rapidan or the mountains at all, but merely of forcing Pope to withdraw. He wrote

President Davis nearly at the end of the campaign that his entire purpose had been to maneuver Pope out of Virginia, not destroy his army. But he disclosed none of this intent to Jackson.

Lee's delay was fatal to Jackson's hopes. One of the great chances in the war was lost. On August 18, Pope got word of the planned attack from an order he found on a captured Confederate officer and from a spy who reported that the Rebel army was assembling near the eastern fords. Accordingly, Pope moved his army back to the Rappahannock River, twenty-five miles north. On August 20 it was firmly arrayed along the river from Rappahannock Station (present-day Remington on U.S. Routes 15 and 29) to Kelly's Ford, four miles downstream.

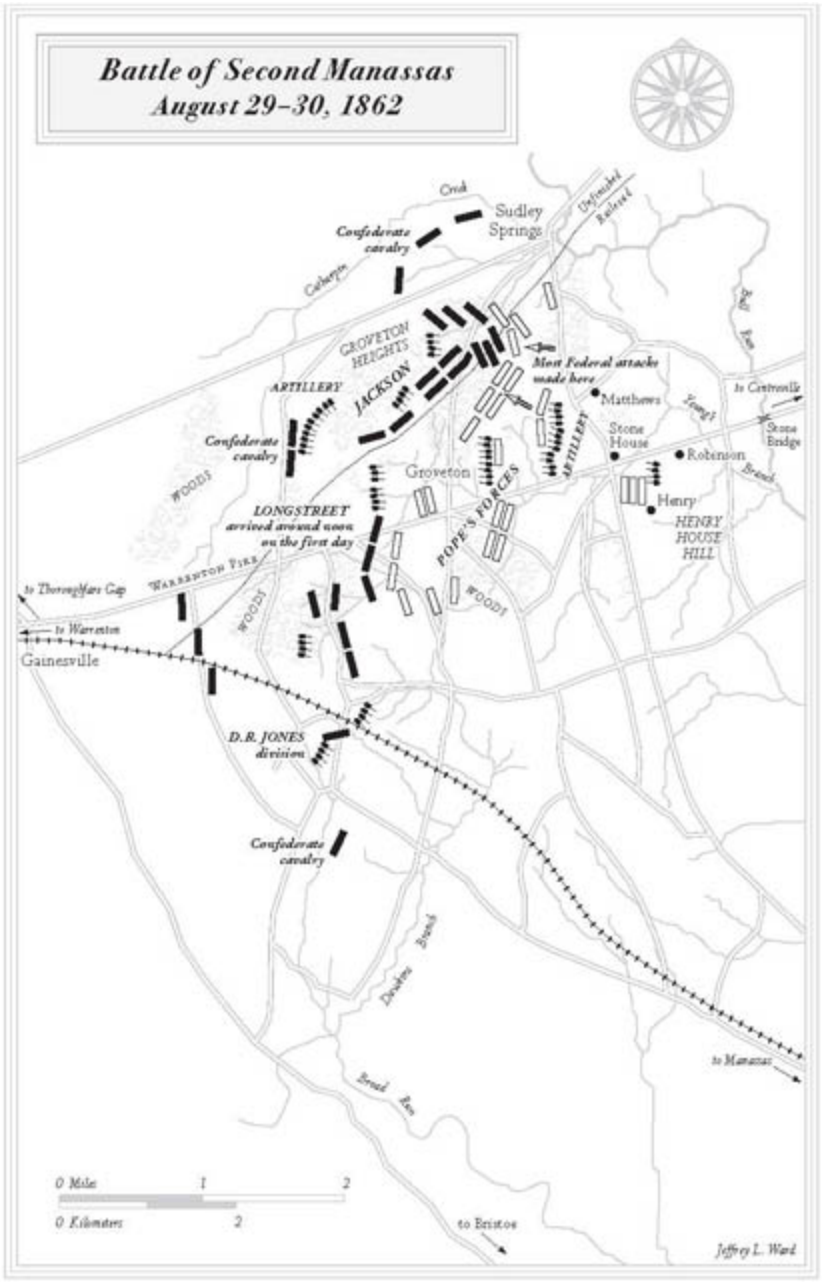
Only a short time remained before Pope's army grew too large to handle. Elements of McClellan's army were already landing at Aquia Creek, on the Potomac near Fredericksburg. Soon his entire force would be available. A strike by Stuart's cavalry to break the railroad bridge at Catlett Station, fourteen miles north of Rappahannock Station, failed. On August 24, Lee told Jackson to take his whole corps, 23,000 men, move on Pope's rear, and break the railroad line, forcing Pope to retreat.

For Jackson, this was an opportunity not to be missed. Instead of edging around Pope's line just east of the Bull Run Mountains (as the Catoctin chain is known in this part of Virginia) and cutting the railway at the nearest point, Jackson swung west of the mountains, moved twenty-five miles north to Thoroughfare Gap, and struck straight east to Manassas Junction, the main Federal supply depot on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad. It was a stunning strategic surprise that not only shattered Pope's entire supply system, but also, by landing less than thirty miles from Washington, posed a direct threat to the national capital.

The news forced Pope to flee from the Rappahannock River. Pope, however, thoroughly underestimated Jackson. He concluded that Jackson was now stuck at Manassas and could be "bagged" by converging Federal forces from the south, west, and north. But when Union forces marched into Manassas on the morning of August 28, 1862, they found that their quarry had flown, and that the entire Federal supply depot was a mass of smoking ruins. It had been consumed by Rebel-set fire.

Only at the end of the day did the Federals discover that Jackson was occupying the heights just west of Groveton, eight miles northwest of

Manassas and three miles northeast of Gainesville, where Lee's army, now marching through Thoroughfare Gap, was to emerge the next day. Thus Jackson had arranged for the entire Confederate army to consolidate at Groveton. But he had also arranged to test a new theory he had developed on how to defeat the Union army in battle. He was certain that he could induce Pope to attack him, because—in accordance with the admonition of Sun Tzu—he seemed to have fled in panic from Manassas and now appeared to be cowering in fear at Groveton. "Warfare is the way of deception," Sun Tzu writes. "Although you are capable, display incapability to the enemy. When committed to employing your forces, feign inactivity."[26]



Jackson had realized that a new approach to battle was necessary because headlong assaults, like those Lee had ordered in the Seven Days, were too deadly. Direct attacks crashed straight into the heart of enemy strength. They were also failing because of the effectiveness of the Minié-ball rifle and of the light canister-armed cannons rolled up to the firing line, which sprayed a deadly cloud of metal fragments at assaulting troops. These two weapons made the practice of lining up forces two men deep and advancing on the enemy virtually unworkable. An entirely new method of

attack had to be devised. But this required a revolutionary change in thinking. The solution came only in 1915, during World War I, when a German captain abandoned formations entirely, instead sending small teams of storm troopers to infiltrate Allied trenches and rolling them up with hand grenades and rifles.

Jackson, however, had found an interim method that preserved traditional formations and orthodox practices. The answer, Jackson saw, was to induce the enemy to attack Confederate forces formed up in a pre-selected, strong defensive position anchored by cannons, with at least one flank that was open enough for the defending army to move around it when the battle ended. Because defensive weapons—the Minié-ball rifle and canister-firing cannons—were so powerful, any attack against a determined and organized defender was bound to fail, as had been proved in the Seven Days battles. The Confederates could then advance around the flank of the weakened and demoralized Union army and either force it into chaotic retreat or drive it against some terrain feature, like a river or a mountain range, and compel its surrender.[27]

Groveton was an admirable site to test Jackson's new theory. It had an open western flank at Gainesville. The Stone Bridge over Bull Run in the Federal rear was the only adequate retreat route for Pope's army. If the Confederates could sweep around the western flank of the Federals, they might block the Stone Bridge, pin the Federal army against Bull Run, and destroy it.

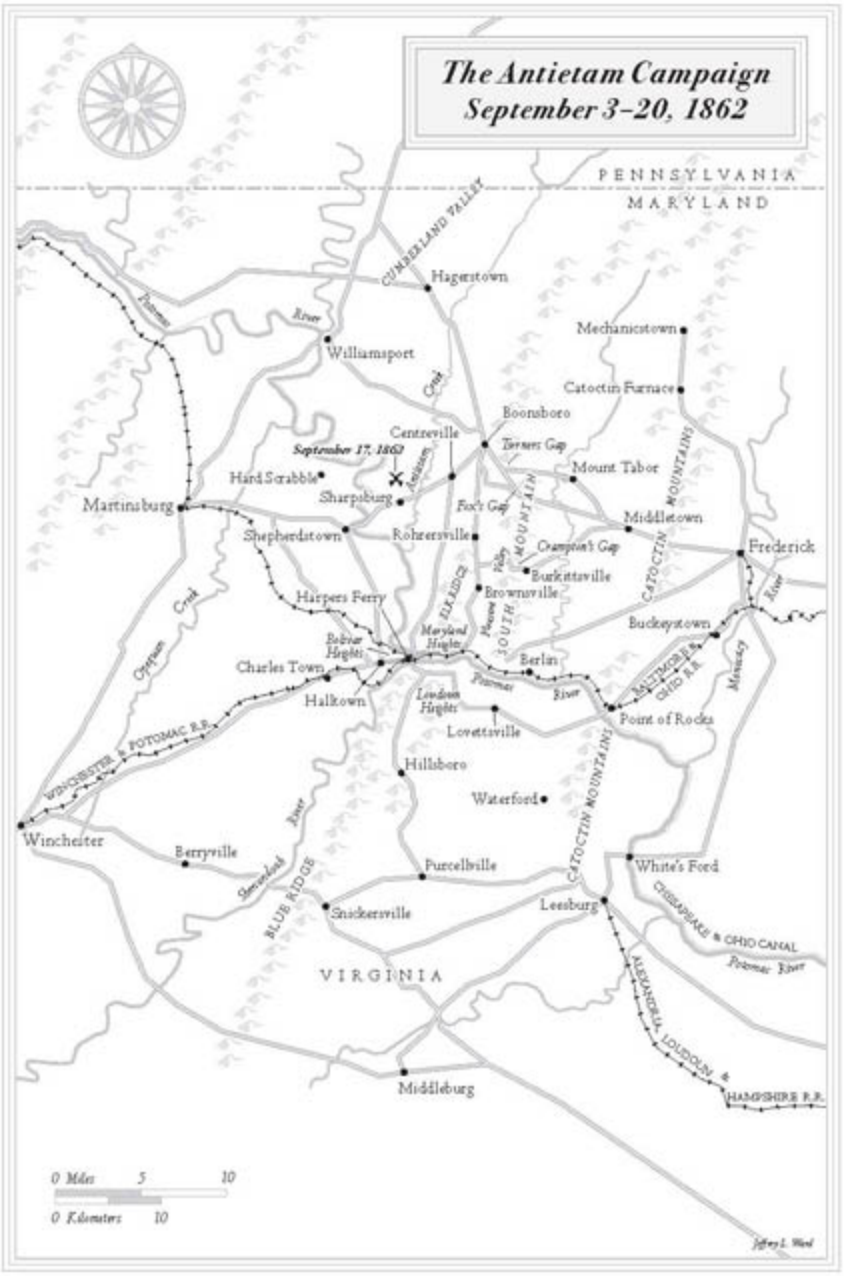
On the morning of August 29, 1862, Pope did attack Jackson, in the battle of Second Manassas. As Jackson expected, Pope's headlong assaults failed and he suffered heavy losses. Around 11:30 a.m., Lee arrived at Gainesville and swung his army almost at a right angle to Pope's army, facing his left flank. But Lee did not attack, as Jackson had expected. Instead, he and Longstreet argued all day about the feasibility of attacking and finally decided against it. A giant opportunity had been lost. But Pope tried to attack Jackson again the next day. Once again Jackson's forces stopped the direct assaults. Once again Lee refused to advance on Pope's totally exposed flank. Only toward the end of the day, when Pope's failed attacks started to disintegrate his army, did Lee at last call for an advance on Pope's flank. But it was too late. The Confederates were unable to seize

Henry House Hill, just above the Stone Bridge, before nightfall, and Pope's army was able to get away. Lincoln, recognizing Pope's incompetence, sent him out west to fight Indians and reinstated McClellan.

What could have been the total destruction of a Federal army became merely a defeat of that army. Jackson had shown Lee a method that could win the war in one or two engagements. But Lee had not grasped it and had not followed through. Jackson did not give up. He looked for other opportunities where Lee might accept his system. But a great chance had been lost at Second Manassas.

Lee now decided to invade Maryland. His aim, just as it had been in the Seven Days, was to attack George McClellan's army. Jackson had just demonstrated at Second Manassas how to defeat the enemy by standing on the defensive and *then* attacking the repulsed and demoralized Federals. But this lesson had not sunk in on Lee.

On September 3, 1862, Lee turned his columns toward Leesburg and the fords over the Potomac River. He halted at Frederick, Maryland, forty miles northwest of Washington. There he held a conference with Jackson and Longstreet. Jackson emphatically urged that the Confederate army take up a strong defensive position with an open flank somewhere east of Frederick. Lincoln—always fearful of an attack on the capital—was certain to require McClellan to keep the Union army between Lee and Washington. Therefore, the road would be open for the Confederates to move eastward to Baltimore or Philadelphia. Because of this peril, McClellan would be obliged to attack Lee at the first opportunity. When he did, Jackson said, he would lose.



Jackson’s proposal was totally logical and compelling. Nine-tenths of Northern industry was located along the rail corridor from Baltimore to southern New Hampshire. The Northern population was also concentrated there. A threat in this direction would be decisive.

McClellan saw the danger clearly. In his official report a year later, he wrote, “One battle lost and almost all would have been lost. Lee’s army might have marched as it pleased on Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York. It could have levied its supplies from a fertile and

undevastated country, extorted tribute from wealthy and populous cities, and nowhere east of the Alleghenies was there another organized force to avert its march."[28]

Despite Jackson's overwhelming argument, Lee refused. He resolved to move west across South Mountain, the extension into Maryland of the Blue Ridge, and then march north to Harrisburg and break the railroad bridge over the Susquehanna River there! It was an appallingly inconsequential strategic move. No real damage could be done to the Northern war effort. And Lee's resolve to attack McClellan—not for McClellan to attack him—would repeat the disastrous results of the Seven Days.[29]

In the campaign that followed, Lee decided to send most of his army to seize bypassed Harpers Ferry, then to reassemble it west of South Mountain in Maryland. The attack, led by Jackson, succeeded very well, forcing 11,500 Union soldiers to surrender. But Lee's order scattering his army was discovered discarded (probably by General D. H. Hill) at the former Rebel campsite at Frederick. McClellan, knowing Lee's dispositions, defeated the small Confederate defending force on South Mountain, forcing it to retreat. Lee's proper course now was to withdraw back into Virginia. However, with an army only half the size of the Union army, he resolved to fight along Antietam Creek, just east of Sharpsburg, on September 17, 1862.

In doing so, Lee violated a fundamental tenet of Sun Tzu—he did not ascertain the terrain on the battle site. The Confederate army was wedged in a cul-de-sac formed by a bend of the Potomac and was incapable of maneuver. The army could do nothing but fight for its life. It succeeded, primarily because of the military ineptitude of McClellan, but it was the bloodiest single day in the Civil War, and it gave Lincoln the opportunity to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which turned the war into a moral crusade. The Maryland campaign of 1862 was a calamity, and it was wholly the fault of Robert E. Lee.

The final event in 1862 that proved Lee's strategic blindness was the Fredericksburg campaign. Lincoln ousted McClellan but named in his place an even more incapable officer, Ambrose E. Burnside. The only thing

Burnside could think to do was to launch a headlong attack against the Confederate army that had emplaced itself on the heights just south of the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg.

Lee resolved to defend this position, but Jackson opposed fighting there. Jackson told Lee that the Confederates would win, but they could not swing around the defeated Federals and shatter their army because the Union guns on Stafford Heights, just opposite the town on the north bank of the river, dominated the entire battlefield and would prevent a Confederate counterblow. Moreover, it would be impracticable to maneuver against Burnside's most vulnerable point, his supply line, because his base at Aquia was only twelve miles away. Burnside could easily withdraw to Aquia Creek before the Rebels could isolate his army.

Jackson proposed instead that the Confederates withdraw to the North Anna River, twenty-five miles south. Here the Federals, advancing from Fredericksburg, would expose their right flank and their supply line for the entire distance from Aquia Creek, thirty-seven miles. If they attacked on the North Anna and were defeated, as Jackson was confident would be the case, they would have to retreat all the way back to Aquia Creek. At numerous points along the way, Confederate cavalry could slow the Federal withdrawal, giving the infantry ample time to swing onto the enemy rear, sever the Union supply line, and force the Federals to attack once again and once again be defeated. It was a chance to destroy the entire Union army.

"I am opposed to fighting on the Rappahannock," Jackson said to General D. H. Hill. "We will whip the enemy, but gain no fruits of victory. I have advised the line of the North Anna, but have been overruled."[30]

So once again Lee refused the advice of Jackson. The Confederates indeed did win the battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. Burnside's headlong attacks failed utterly, costing him 12,600 men. But the North could replace its losses easily. And the South, as Jackson had predicted, gained nothing.

The 1862 campaigns show conclusively that when the military plans were consistent with Sun Tzu's maxims, tremendous gains resulted. When they were not, the effects ranged from lost opportunities to catastrophe. For example, spectacular success followed Stonewall Jackson's use of an

indirect approach (Sun Tzu's *qi*) to overwhelm Banks's army at Strasburg. A great loss came when Lee refused to use this same approach to corner Pope's army on the Rapidan. Another great gain came when Jackson knew and exploited the geography of the Shenandoah Valley (in accordance with another Sun Tzu axiom) and stopped Banks from advancing on Staunton because he could sever Banks's supply line at New Market. An irretrievable loss occurred at Antietam when Lee failed to do the same, to find out that the Potomac River's course boxed in the Confederate army and eliminated any possibility of swinging on the Union flank.

FIVE

Gettysburg, 1863

In May 1863, the new Union commander, “Fighting Joe” Hooker, concentrated a huge force of 70,000 troops at Chancellorsville, on the left flank of the Confederate army at Fredericksburg. Robert E. Lee accepted the urging of Stonewall Jackson to swing his entire corps onto the unguarded western flank of Hooker’s force, drive it away from United States Ford, the only available passage over the Rappahannock River, and force its surrender.[1]

Jackson’s strike was completely successful. But Jackson was mortally wounded as he was organizing the final movement to block United States Ford, and this decisive strike was never carried out. The Union army was severely defeated, but it was able to retreat back across the Rappahannock.[2]

Now Jackson was gone. None of the officers Lee had left possessed anything like Jackson’s stature. A hobbled Confederate army took up the task that Lee now assigned it: invasion of the North to seek a decision in the war. Lee reorganized his army into three corps under the command of James Longstreet, Richard S. Ewell, and A. P. Hill.

Longstreet had absorbed some of Jackson’s thinking. He tried to get Lee to resolve not to attack the enemy, but to give battle only when Confederate forces were in a strong defensive position. Other Confederate leaders were thinking along the same lines. Porter Alexander, Longstreet’s

brilliant artillery chief, observed that when all of the Army of Northern Virginia's corps were together, nothing could successfully attack them.[3]

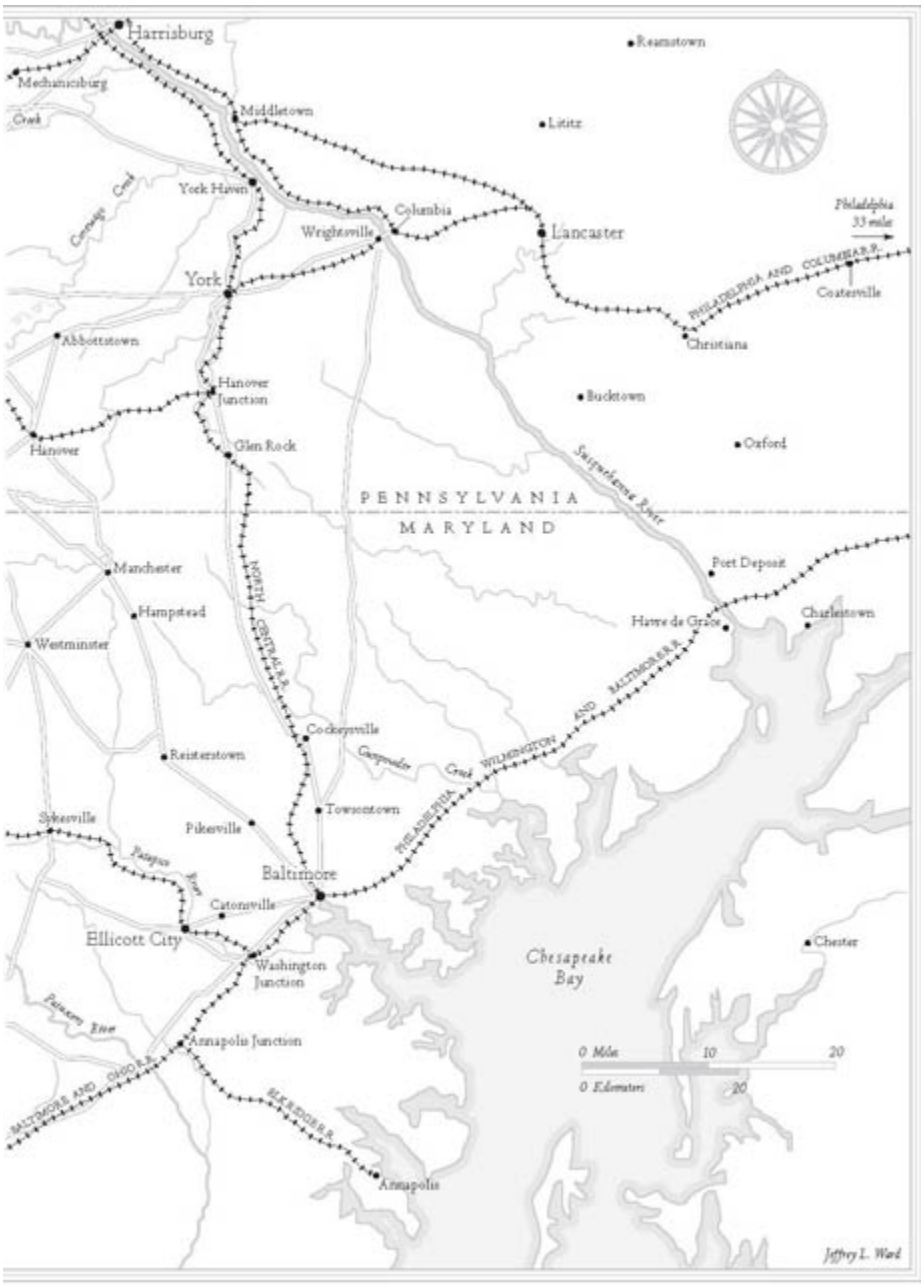
Longstreet thought he got Lee's promise to stand on the defensive in the campaign in the North. In the event, Longstreet's understanding turned out to be completely wrong.

On June 10, 1863, Lee launched his army northward. Avoiding Union army strength and following the line of least resistance, Lee slipped around to the west of the main Federal forces protecting Washington and moved into the Cumberland Valley of Maryland and Pennsylvania. Preceded by far-ranging cavalry that nearly reached the Pennsylvania capital of Harrisburg, the leading Confederate corps under Ewell seized Carlisle, twenty miles west of Harrisburg, on June 27, while Jubal Early's division pressed on through York to Wrightsville on the Susquehanna River, about thirty miles southeast of Harrisburg.

In this first stage of the invasion, Sun Tzu could have only applauded Lee's actions. He had seized the strategic initiative by maneuvering to a nearly unassailable position. In doing so, Lee had demonstrated Sun Tzu's single most profound injunction: "The way to avoid what is strong is to strike what is weak," and its closely related axiom, "As water seeks the easiest path to the sea, so armies should avoid obstacles and seek avenues of least resistance."[4]

Lee thus struck into virtually undefended space. Now well north of the Union army, he could move in any direction while his Federal opponent, newly appointed (June 28) Army of the Potomac commander George G. Meade, could do little more than react to Lee's initiatives.

The Gettysburg Campaign
June 10–July 14, 1863
BLUE MOUNTAIN
Conodoguinet Creek
Kingston
Carlisle
Yellow Breeches
Newville
Oakville
VALLEY R.R.
KITTATINNY MOUNTAIN
Shippensburg
Petersburg
CUMBERLAND VALLEY
Bendersville
Heidlersburg
Conococheague Creek
Chambersburg
Fayetteville
SOUTH MOUNTAIN
Mummasburg
New Oxford
Mercersburg
New Guilford
Cashtown
Gettysburg
COVE MOUNTAIN
W. Branch
Greencastle
Fairfield
Marsh Creek
Littlestown
PENNSYLVANIA
Waynesboro
MARYLAND
Emmitsburg
Taneytown
Hagerstown
Leitersburgh
Cavetown
NORTH MOUNTAIN
BALTIMORE AND OHIO R.R.
Funkstown
Williamsport
Middleburg
Pipe Creek
Uniontown
WEST VIRGINIA
(Admitted to the Union June 20, 1863)
Falling Waters
Antietam Creek
Boonsboro
Lewistown
Woodsboro
Myersville
Martinsburg
Sharpsburg
SOUTH MOUNTAIN
Middletown
Frederick
Shepherdstown
Burkittsville
New Market
OHIO R.R.
Harpers Ferry
Bolivar Heights
Opequon Creek
Charles Town
BALTIMORE AND OHIO R.R.
Damascus
Point of Rocks
WINCHESTER AND POTOMAC R.R.
Blue Ridge Mountains
Potomac River
CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN
Barnesville
Winchester
Berryville
Shenandoah River
White's Ferry
Poolesville
Gaithersburg
Brookeville
Percellville
Leesburg
Edwards Ferry
Rockville
Snicker's Gap
VIRGINIA
Upperville
Ashby's Gap
Dranesville
ALEXANDRIA, LOUDOUN AND HAMPSHIRE R.R.
Middleburg
Washington



Lee had two particularly promising strategic options. He could consolidate his army at Carlisle, forcing Meade to attack strongly defended Confederate positions on well-chosen ground; or he could turn the Susquehanna River into a defensive moat and strike out on the undefended road to Philadelphia, the North's second-largest city and vital north-south railway hub. The loss of Philadelphia would be a military and political disaster from which the North likely could not recover. A strike at Philadelphia would have been consistent with Sun Tzu's prescription. He

says that a good general “offers something that the enemy must seize.”[5] Philadelphia was most definitely that “something.”

Meade, whose army had cautiously advanced only to Frederick, Maryland, was powerless to prevent Lee from taking either choice. If Lee elected to remain at Carlisle, he would have days to find a suitable elevation and prepare an impregnable defense before Meade’s army could possibly reach him. If Lee decided to strike out for Philadelphia—he was closer to the city than Meade and it was by far his best choice—the Union army would be obliged to race after him. Anywhere along the road, Lee could pull up his army on an easily defended elevation with open flanks, build field fortifications, mount cannons, and wait. Meade would be forced to attack under the most desperate circumstances. He almost certainly would be defeated.

The campaign was all but won. But, incredibly, Lee did not see it. Nor did he make any effort to play on Meade’s anxieties and confuse him as to his intentions. Lee did not even realize he had achieved a spectacular strategic position at Carlisle. We know this is true because the moment he learned that Meade had reached Frederick, Lee abandoned his gains and sent his army in forced marches to concentrate at Cashtown, in southern Pennsylvania, eight miles west of Gettysburg. This was a most destructive and completely counterproductive decision.[6]

Lee’s troops were compelled to force-march toward the rallying point (his three corps were dispersed twenty to forty miles away from Cashtown). Getting there was an exhausting and disorienting exercise for the troops. No one knew what was waiting at Cashtown. It was a plunge into darkness. In his official report, Lee confessed that he knew nothing about the size of enemy forces advancing on Gettysburg, nor what their intentions were. Once he got to Cashtown, Lee stumbled into a meeting engagement with Meade’s army that sacrificed every advantage he possessed. This led to a totally unnecessary battle at Gettysburg.

Sun Tzu says that an army should move in accordance with a thought-out plan, not react to unexpected events. “If the entire army contends for advantage,” Sun Tzu writes, “you will not arrive in time.” This means that one should never rush into battle but should maneuver into a tactically advantageous position before challenging the enemy. Lee’s actions were

directly to the contrary. He rushed to a rallying point about which he had no information. The terrain was not even known. He had no definite target or objective. Lee placed his army in an extremely dangerous position before its first encounter with the enemy.[7] It was absolutely uncalled for.

Sun Tzu says that generals should not proceed in haste to some unfamiliar place. Having a purpose and sticking to it establishes order and cohesion. Lee should not have reacted to the news that Meade was pursuing him by rushing to Cashtown. Of course Meade was pursuing him! What else could he do? But it would take days before Meade could challenge him. In fact, the farther Lee was away from Meade, the longer it would take Meade to reach him and the greater preparations Lee could make to receive him. By rushing to Cashtown and thus toward Meade, Lee threw away this priceless advantage of time. Lee should have already figured out where the Confederate army was heading, and he should have continued with his intent. This would have forced Meade to conform to Lee's plans, not Lee to conform to Meade's.

It's quite apparent, however, that Lee did not have any objective when he moved into Pennsylvania. The strategic positions the Confederate army achieved were not in accordance with a thought-out design by Lee; they were gained by the bold actions of subordinate commanders. Lee did not even recognize what they had done.

A Sun Tzu maxim is perfectly suited to Lee's situation: "The victorious army first realizes the conditions for victory, and then seeks to engage in battle. The vanquished army fights first, and then seeks victory." This is precisely what Lee did. He fought first and then sought victory. He hastened back to Cashtown without any plan. He stumbled into a battle at Gettysburg. Every action during the three days of the battle was an improvisation. He compounded these blunders by also rushing into combat against an enemy already in possession of the battlefield. Sun Tzu warns that "first on the battlefield waits for the enemy fresh," while "last on the battlefield charges into the fray exhausted."[8]

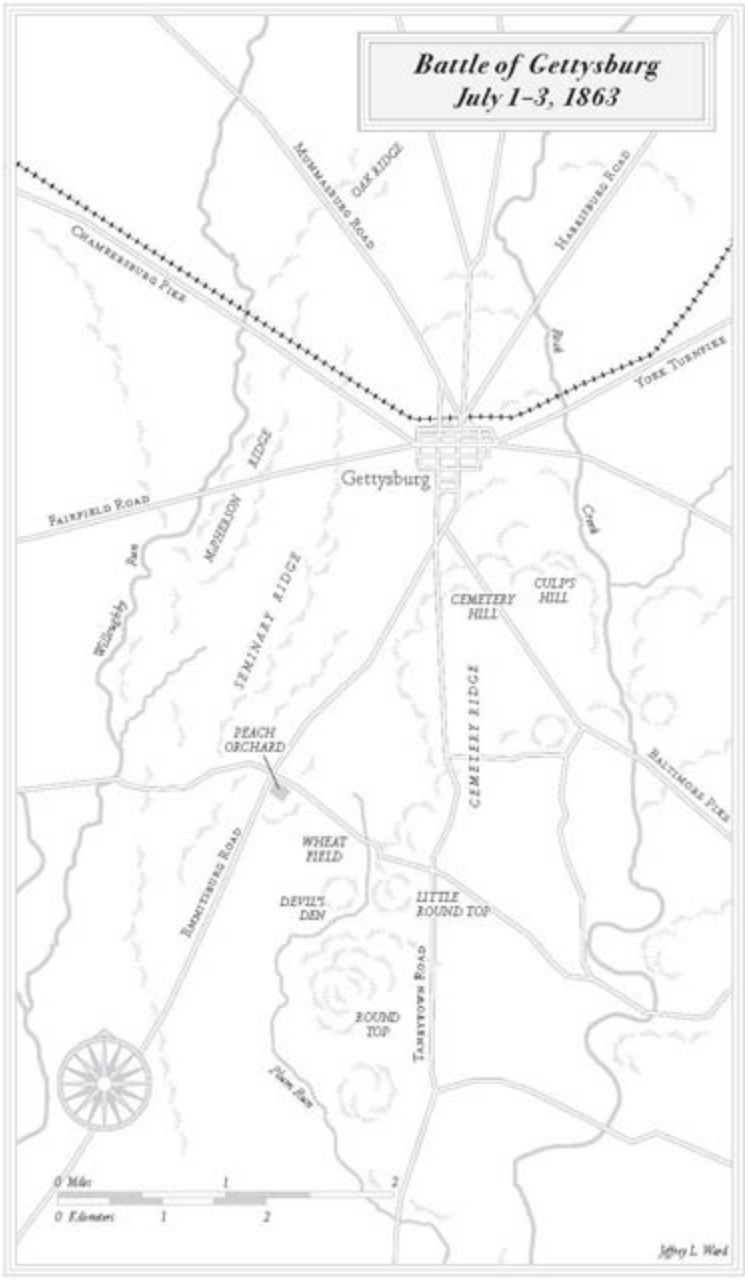
The battle of Gettysburg began in an odd way. Harry Heth's division in Hill's 3rd Corps struck out from Cashtown on July 1, foraging for much-needed footwear rumored to be at Gettysburg. Instead of shoes, however,

the Confederates found the Union cavalry division of John Buford waiting for them. Hill pushed more units toward Gettysburg to sweep the Yankees out of town, but he encountered infantry from the 1st Corps arriving in time to back up Buford's cavalrymen.

Like a magnet, this unplanned meeting engagement drew the two armies together. When Lee arrived on the scene, he quickly abandoned any thought of defense and moved directly to an offensive battle.

Lee had scant knowledge of the battleground and even less information on the force gathering to oppose him. In total violation of Sun Tzu's maxims, he entered into a billowing battle with no idea of how to win it. Suffering heavy losses, Lee drove Union defenders off McPherson Ridge to the west of Gettysburg and occupied Seminary Ridge, southwest of the town. Meanwhile Ewell, coming down from Carlisle, drove other Federal defenders from the town and onto Cemetery and Culp's hills just to the south.

Gettysburg started as an accidental battle. It need not have expanded into a full-scale engagement. As soon as he realized that Gettysburg was occupied by an unknown number of Union troops, Lee should have pulled back to South Mountain, just west of Cashtown, concentrated his army, ascertained enemy dispositions, and then decided what to do. This is exactly what Sun Tzu would have recommended. "One who excels at warfare," he writes, "first establishes himself in a position where he cannot be defeated."[9]



Instead, Lee rushed headlong into battle. This is precisely what he did in the Seven Days. He blundered into one collision after another. In the Shenandoah Valley campaign, on the other hand, Stonewall Jackson, before he fought the battles, knew that he would be victorious at McDowell, Front Royal, Winchester, Cross Keys, and Port Republic.

Even after Lee failed to pull back to South Mountain and ascertain what actually lay ahead, he still could have avoided disaster if he had used common sense at the end of the first day. He should have observed that the

Federals were occupying an extremely formidable defensive position on the ridgeline extending south from Gettysburg. It ran from Cemetery and Culp's hills on the north along Cemetery Ridge to two prominent knolls on the south, Little Round Top and Round Top. This ridgeline gave the Federals a decided advantage in a defensive battle. When Ewell's troops failed to rush Cemetery and Culp's hills at the end of the first day, Lee should have recognized that he must not attack the ridgeline. He should go around it or march away from it. As Sun Tzu says, "Do not attack well-regulated formations."[10]

But Lee did not see the impossibility of assaulting Cemetery Ridge. James Longstreet arrived on Seminary Ridge after the fighting had ended on July 1. He found Lee watching the Federals concentrate on Cemetery Hill. Longstreet studied the situation with his glasses for five or ten minutes. Then he turned to Lee. "All we have to do," he said, "is to throw our army around by their left [that is, to the south], and we shall interpose between the Federal army and Washington." There the Confederates could find a suitable elevation, emplace guns, build field fortifications, and await the Federals. If they failed to attack, the Confederates could move back toward Washington. To prevent this, however, Longstreet was sure that the Federals would assault as soon as possible. "When they attack," he said, "we shall beat them."[11]

Lee strongly resisted Longstreet's argument. Longstreet argued back just as forcefully. He and Lee knew that Lincoln always insisted on the Union army remaining between the capital and the Confederate army. But Lee now had the chance to place his army closer to Washington than Meade's army. Meade would be certain to attack immediately; otherwise, he'd be ousted from his job.

General Lee finally concluded the argument: "They are there in position [pointing to Cemetery Hill and Ridge], and I am going to whip them or they are going to whip me."[12]

What an astonishing refusal to face the facts! The thinking of Sun Tzu and Napoléon Bonaparte, and common sense, all lead to the identical conclusion: do not attack head-on a superior enemy in position on a highly defensible elevation. This was all the more true because both armies were

employing the Minié-ball rifle and light cannons rolled up to the defending line and firing canister at attacking troops. Defenders were also shielding themselves behind field fortifications, if they had time and materials to build them, or behind natural barriers like stone fences. The advantage had swung overwhelmingly to the defense.

An army should go around roadblocks, fortifications, and defended strong points, Sun Tzu says. “The army’s disposition of force avoids the substantial and strikes the vacuous,” he says.[13] Napoléon said never to make a frontal attack if one could do otherwise, and always to move on the enemy’s rear, even if it fails, because a rear maneuver will shake enemy morale and force him into a mistake. Instead, Lee fell back into the pattern of headlong assault he had exhibited since he first took command in June 1862.

Meade realized, the moment he arrived on Cemetery Hill just before midnight on July 1, that Lee could dislodge him merely by moving between him and the capital. Abner Doubleday, commander of the Union 1st Corps, also saw the danger. “Lee could easily have maneuvered Meade out of his strong position on the heights, and should have done so,” he wrote.[14]

On the second day of the battle, July 2, Lee insisted that James Longstreet’s 1st Corps attack Cemetery Ridge from the southwest. Lee had decided that the Union army was occupying only Cemetery Hill and Culp’s Hill, and Confederate forces could mount the supposedly unoccupied slopes of Cemetery Ridge just to the south and roll up the Union forces on the two northern hills. Longstreet protested, but to no avail.

Lee ordered the attack without first gaining definitive battlefield intelligence. Sun Tzu writes, “Determine [the enemy’s] disposition of force to know the tenable and fatal terrain. Probe them to know where they have an excess, where an insufficiency.”[15]

During the morning of July 2, Lee sent two engineer officers to determine whether enemy troops were occupying lower Cemetery Ridge and the Round Tops. They reported back that isolated individuals but no Union forces were present. Neither Lee nor Longstreet made any further reconnaissance, a profound failure on the part of both officers. As the day wore on, the situation changed entirely. Meade ordered Daniel Sickles to occupy Cemetery Ridge with his 3rd Corps. But Sickles thought a better

place was the elevated Peach Orchard on the Emmitsburg Road between Seminary and Cemetery ridges. He moved his corps west, creating a deep salient with the Peach Orchard as its apex.

Longstreet only discovered Sickles's corps at 3:30 p.m. He had planned to install his artillery at the Peach Orchard to cover his advance on Cemetery Ridge. The Confederates now could not possibly seize Cemetery Ridge quickly and roll up the Federal line. The Confederates would have to seize the Peach Orchard first. This would take time and give the Federals an opportunity to strengthen defensive positions on Cemetery Ridge. Sickles's advance invalidated Lee's entire plan. But Longstreet, angry that he had been overruled, sent no message informing Lee. Instead, he obdurately held to the original orders.

Longstreet's circumstance is a recurring factor in warfare. Military command structure requires a subordinate to obey the orders of his superior, even if he disapproves of them. It is the subordinate's duty to carry out his commander's wishes to the best of his ability. However, Longstreet now had positive information that Lee's original premise was incorrect. The Federals most certainly occupied Cemetery Ridge, and they had advanced into the valley to the west of it. It was Longstreet's responsibility to inform Lee of these developments. Whether it would have changed Lee's mind is unknown, but Longstreet's silence was a dereliction of duty.

Just at this time, McIvor Law, a brigade commander in John Bell Hood's division, offered Longstreet a far better plan—an alternative that could have won the battle in a day. Law discovered that Round Top was unoccupied. It rose, Law wrote, "like a huge sentinel guarding the Federal left flank, while the spurs and ridges trending off to the north of it afforded unrivaled positions for the use of artillery."[16]

Cannons placed on Round Top would be able to deliver enfilade fire —or fire on the *side* of the Union positions—along the entire Union line from Little Round Top to Cemetery Hill. Enfilade fire is almost impossible to defend against. The only solution is to withdraw. Porter Alexander described well the advantages: "A battery established where it can enfilade others need not trouble itself about aim. It has only to fire in the right direction and the shot finds something to hurt wherever it falls. No troops, infantry or artillery, can long submit to enfilade fire."[17] So mounting

cannons on Round Top would have been decisive because the Union army would have been compelled to abandon the ridgeline.

Law told Hood that Round Top was the true base for the Confederate army, and that his brigade could seize the hill, block the Taneytown road, a quarter of a mile to the east, and cut the Baltimore Pike, a couple of miles beyond. This would unhinge the entire Union position. Law said occupation of Round Top would compel the enemy to change front, leave his strong position on the ridgeline, and attack the Confederates on Round Top. Law was right. His brigade could strike where the enemy was not, and seize the one position that dominated the entire Union line.

Hood endorsed Law's proposal, but when Hood advanced the idea, Longstreet replied that Lee was already fretting with him over the delay in attacking, and he was unwilling to add to it by offering further suggestions. So Longstreet compounded his dereliction of duty by refusing to propose Law's plan to Lee.

If Lee had known, what would he have done? It's evident that Lee had missed or disregarded the importance of Round Top, although he had been observing the terrain for more than a day. Seizing Round Top would have led to a defensive battle, and Lee wanted to attack. We do not know for certain, of course, but Lee most probably would have ignored Law's plan just as he had ignored Longstreet's plan to move south.

The battle of Gettysburg provides enlightening instruction on how generals estimate terrain and evaluate the dispositions of the enemy. What they *see* varies enormously among individuals. An observant person looking at the landscape of Gettysburg is struck almost at once by the dominance of Round Top at the southern end of the ridgeline. The hill soars above the other terrain features. For a person with imagination—most especially for a seasoned military officer who should have special knowledge about enfilade fire—it stands forth as the true place for cannons. But quite clearly either Lee did not see it or he ignored it. The same is true for Meade, who made no effort to seize Round Top.[18]

But McIvor Law did see it only a short time after he arrived on the field. Law was a subordinate commander, however. The person who *must* see is the senior commander. As Sun Tzu advises, a successful general is one who can take in an entire scene.[19] Napoléon Bonaparte understood this

necessity quite well. He said a superior general has *coup d'oeil*, or the ability to see things at a glance.

The presence or absence of commanders with true vision largely determines the outcome of battles, and usually of wars. If a general who can see is opposed to one who cannot see, the general with vision will almost certainly prevail. This was the case with Stonewall Jackson in the battles he fought as senior commander. When a commander who can't see clashes with an opposing commander who also can't see, the outcome will depend on other factors. This was the case at Gettysburg.

Lee not only couldn't see but also was unable to make reasoned choices. Throughout the war, Lee focused on the enemy in front of him. He seldom saw anything else. This is why the Seven Days battles played out as they did. This is why Lee couldn't fathom Stonewall Jackson's strategy to sweep around John Pope's army and drive it against the Rapidan River or the mountains. This is why he sat for nearly two days on the undefended flank of the Union army at Second Manassas and did not attack.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the battle of Gettysburg is that the Confederates actually captured Round Top, but nothing was done to exploit the feat. Colonel William C. Oates, commanding two Alabama regiments, seized Round Top in minutes after Longstreet launched Hood's division at 5:00 p.m. Oates had not been party to the dispute with Longstreet. But as soon as he reached the summit, Oates realized that the Confederates could evict the Federals from their entire position. All they had to do was to cut down some trees and drag cannons to the top. No attack on Little Round Top, Cemetery Ridge, Cemetery Hill, or Culp's Hill was necessary.[20]

But a staff officer reached Oates and ordered him to follow Lee's original attack plan and advance on Little Round Top, preparatory to climbing Cemetery Ridge. Oates protested, but he obeyed the orders. His men collided with the 20th Maine Regiment that had just arrived on Little Round Top. The 20th Maine repulsed repeated attacks by Oates's regiments. Ironically, Law was in command of this operation. Hood was badly wounded shortly after the attack started, so Law took charge of the division. He spent the rest of the day trying to follow Lee's orders. Therefore, no senior officer was able to focus on Round Top, and it was never exploited.

Longstreet waited an hour and a half before sending Lafayette McLaws's division against the Peach Orchard at 6:30 p.m. After fierce and sustained assaults, the Confederates cracked the center of Sickles's line at the orchard, forcing the entire Union corps, plus reinforcements, to withdraw in disorder. The Rebels were stopped by darkness and a gun line established by Federal cannoneers along Plum Run, just west of Cemetery Ridge.[21]

The attacks cost the Confederates 4,000 casualties, but the effect was merely to drive Sickles back to Cemetery Ridge, the *real* Union defensive line. Longstreet thus rectified a line that Sickles had overextended in the first place.

Because of Lee's faulty actions, the advantages the South had gained by invading the North had been washed away by the evening of July 2, 1863. Since Lee once more refused Longstreet's plea on the morning of July 3 to move the Confederate army to the south, the only reasonable course left was to withdraw back into Virginia while the South still possessed some offensive power. But Lee refused to do this. Instead he insisted on launching a headlong assault against the very center of the Union position—an action that has gone down in history as Pickett's Charge. Of all the counterproductive actions Lee took in the war, this was by far the most damaging.

Sun Tzu might have been speaking of a situation similar to what happened on Gettysburg's climactic day, July 3, when he said, "One who knows when he *can* fight, and when he *cannot* fight," will be victorious. Sun Tzu emphasizes that "there is terrain for which one does not contend."[22] There is no better example of such terrain than the strong Union positions running from Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill, along Cemetery Ridge, and anchored at Little Round Top on July 3. Lee should have realized that a frontal attack targeting the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge—"terrain for which one does not contend"—was an action that his army "cannot fight."

Longstreet tried with all of his argumentative skills to talk Lee out of making the attack. But Lee adamantly refused. Stonewall Jackson might have persuaded Lee to follow a wiser course of action, but Longstreet could not do so.

In a lost fragment of *The Art of War* discovered in an ancient tomb years after the original text was written, Sun Tzu answers a question from the king of Wu that supports Longstreet's logic: "Suppose the enemy arrives first, occupies the strategic positions and holds the advantageous ones with selected troops. What should we do? If the enemy has gained a position, then be careful not to attack it. Draw him away by pretending to go off. The enemy will certainly come forth to rescue the endangered target. What others want we will give them; what they abandon we will take."[23]

Depending on his men to win the day, Lee launched 13,500 of them in a frontal assault against the center of the Union position. What a tragic refusal to face his responsibilities! How desperately the South needed the wisdom of Sun Tzu that day! He says: "One who excels at warfare seeks victory through the strategic configuration of power, not from reliance on men."[24]

A general's plans and their execution should accomplish his goals. A general should never depend on his soldiers to accomplish with their blood what his own strategy and tactics have failed to achieve. Lee's dispositions at Gettysburg were atrocious, and victory could be achieved only if the men exhibited superhuman valor. This was impossible, and failure resulted. Men should never be put into a position where they must save a situation. They should be used to exploit a situation.

A great general *preserves* the lives of his men by placing them in positions where their presence and their actions achieve victory. A great general does not descend into desperate straits where he can succeed only by sacrificing the lives of his men. In the Gettysburg campaign, Lee had a number of chances to move his army to places where it would have been impossible for him to be defeated—and where he then could have swept around the enemy and defeated him. He could have stood on the defensive at Carlisle or on the road to Philadelphia. He could have concentrated on South Mountain just west of Cashtown. Once committed to Gettysburg, he could have moved to the south of Cemetery Ridge, forcing the Federals to evacuate. He even could have stood on the defensive on Seminary Ridge, the main Confederate position at Gettysburg, and forced the Federals to attack him—and be defeated, just as he was defeated when he attacked them.

Porter Alexander saw this opportunity clearly. “It does not seem improbable that we could have faced Meade safely on the 2nd [of July] at Gettysburg without assaulting him in his wonderfully strong position,” he wrote. “We had the prestige of victory with us, having chased him off the field and through the town. We had a fine defensive position on Seminary Ridge ready at our hand to occupy. It was not such a really wonderful position as the enemy happened to fall into, but it was no bad one, and it could never have been successfully assaulted.” Alexander added that “the onus of attack was upon Meade anyhow. We could even have fallen back to Cashtown and held the mountain passes with all the prestige of victory, and popular sentiment would have forced Meade to take the aggressive.”[25]

But Lee relied totally on his men to achieve what was manifestly unachievable: to cross a bullet- and shell-strewn field more than half a mile wide and overcome an emplaced superior enemy in an elevated position. To order such an attack was a monstrous failure of leadership.

Porter Alexander was in charge of a tremendous preparatory artillery bombardment from 138 Confederate guns disposed around the Peach Orchard and along Seminary Ridge. Alexander was directing this fire from a point out in the valley in front of Seminary Ridge.

Longstreet came out alone to where Alexander was standing. “I don’t want to make this attack,” he told his artillery chief. “I believe it will fail. I do not see how it can succeed. I would not make it even now, but that General Lee has ordered and expects it.”

Alexander believed Longstreet was on the verge of stopping the attack, “and even with slight encouragement he would do it.” But Alexander, a colonel, wrote, “I was too conscious of my own youth and inexperience to express any opinion not directly asked. So I remained silent while Longstreet fought his battle out alone and obeyed his orders.”[26]

The Confederate infantrymen from divisions commanded by George Pickett, Johnston Pettigrew, and Isaac Trimble stepped off around 2:00 p.m. on July 3. Pickett’s Charge was bloodily repulsed, with half of the men being killed or wounded. Realizing that the battle was irretrievably lost, Lee met the survivors of the charge with the lament, “It is all my fault.” He spoke the truth.

Pickett’s Charge should be seen as a vastly magnified version of the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava in the Crimean War—as an act of lunacy or perversity by a commander who ignored better counsel and brought on a disaster that could and should have been avoided.

Of the more than 150,000 Confederate and Union soldiers taking part in the three-day battle, nearly 50,000 became casualties. Both sides suffered about the same number of losses, but they represented 30 percent of Lee’s army and 25 percent of Meade’s force. While the Union army could readily replace its Gettysburg losses—and add tens of thousands more fresh combat troops to its field forces—the Confederate army could not.

Lee brought his defeated army back to Virginia, evading Meade’s half-hearted pursuit and crossing the rain-swollen Potomac River the night of July 13–14. The remainder of the war played out to its inevitable end. Nearly two years after leading the Confederate army to its “high tide” at Gettysburg, Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

What would Sun Tzu have done if he had been in command of the Southern army at Gettysburg those fateful days in July of 1863? It is safe to say that he would not have fought the battle at all.

SIX

Battle of the Marne, 1914

The decisive battle of the Marne in early September 1914 is one of the great examples in history of how and how not to apply the fundamental strategic concept of Sun Tzu: his idea of combining orthodox (*zheng*) and unorthodox (*qi*) forces. In this battle the German chief of staff, Helmuth von Moltke, ignored the original battle plan, which exemplified Sun Tzu's concept, and instead turned the *qi* force intended to circle spectacularly around Paris into a direct *zheng* force that charged directly into French strength. The consequence of this disastrous decision was the loss of World War I by Germany.

Virtually all military operations—from the smallest local engagement to the biggest strategic campaign—can be reduced to how or whether a commander applies *zheng* and *qi*. Uncounted commanders over the ages have been ignorant of the concept of orthodox and unorthodox forces, or they have disregarded it. All but a few of the generals on both sides in the American Civil War were such officers, and they made headlong attacks that relied on brute force to achieve their goals. That is why six out of seven of their assaults failed.

On the other hand, practically all successful commanders throughout history have applied the rule of *zheng* and *qi*. Combining these two approaches causes the enemy to divide his own strength, allowing the

decisive blow to be delivered against a fraction of the enemy's power, not —as in the case of a direct attack—against the vast bulk of his power.

"In warfare," Sun Tzu writes, "the strategic configurations of power do not exceed the unorthodox and the orthodox, but the changes of the unorthodox and the orthodox can never be completely exhausted. The unorthodox and orthodox mutually produce each other, just like an endless cycle. Who can exhaust them?"[1]

In general, the orthodox is the main force that engages the enemy and holds him in place, while the unorthodox is the smaller force that attacks the enemy at a different, unexpected, place, usually flank or rear, forcing him to disintegrate.

But this normal arrangement can be reversed. In the 1805 campaign leading up to the battle of Austerlitz, for example, a small French cavalry force under Joachim Murat pressed through the Black Forest of southern Germany and locked in place the Austrian army under Karl Mack von Leiberich at Ulm on the Danube River. Meanwhile, the main French army under Napoléon Bonaparte moved through Germany farther north and descended on the rear of Mack, forcing his surrender. In this case, Murat was the orthodox, or *zheng*, force, while the French Grand Army was the unorthodox, or *qi*, force. A similar application of the principle occurred in Napoléon's Italian campaign of 1796–1797. He drew the Austrian army to Valenza on the Po River in Piedmont, Italy, with a huge demonstration, while his main army marched sixty miles down the Po and crossed at Piacenza, where it threatened Austria's main base of Milan, forcing the Austrians to withdraw eastward in disorder. The Valenza demonstration was the *zheng* force, while the Piacenza crossing was the *qi* force.

The cause of World War I was economic rivalry. After Germany unified in 1871, its industrial production multiplied several times over. By the turn of the twentieth century, it surpassed Britain in industrial development and overall economic power. Germany began seeking a large colonial empire and expanding international trade. Most of these advances came at the expense of Britain.

German leaders on the right began to challenge Britain's leading role in world trade. To gain more of this trade, they induced Germany to embark

on a fateful program to challenge the Royal Navy. Britain, whose empire was founded on sea trade, was unwilling to tolerate any threat to its navy. The result was a fierce naval arms race. By 1909 Britain had won. Its navy was twice the size of Germany's, and the disparity was growing, not shrinking. But Britain, fearful of Germany's intentions and anxious about its economic growth, had signed a series of agreements with France in 1904 that grew into a secret military alliance, and it had signed a similar agreement with Russia in 1907.

In 1907 Arthur Balfour, who had been British prime minister from 1902 to 1905, told an American diplomat, "We are probably fools not to find a reason for declaring war on Germany before she builds too many ships and takes away our trade."

American President Woodrow Wilson remarked in 1919, "This war was a commercial and industrial war. It was not a political war." About the same time, the English economist John Maynard Keynes wrote that Britain had destroyed a trade rival in the war. "Do you want to know the cause of the war?" the automaker Henry Ford asked. "It is capitalism, greed, the dirty hunger for dollars."[2]

Although the economic collision with Britain was the underlying cause of the war, Germany also faced severe challenges on the Continent. As a result of the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, Germany had annexed the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. This covetous avarice of Germany turned France into a mortal enemy bent on revenge. Along with the danger in the west, Germany faced a potential enemy in the east. Russia was seeking to expand into the Balkans at the expense of Germany's only reliable ally, Austria-Hungary.

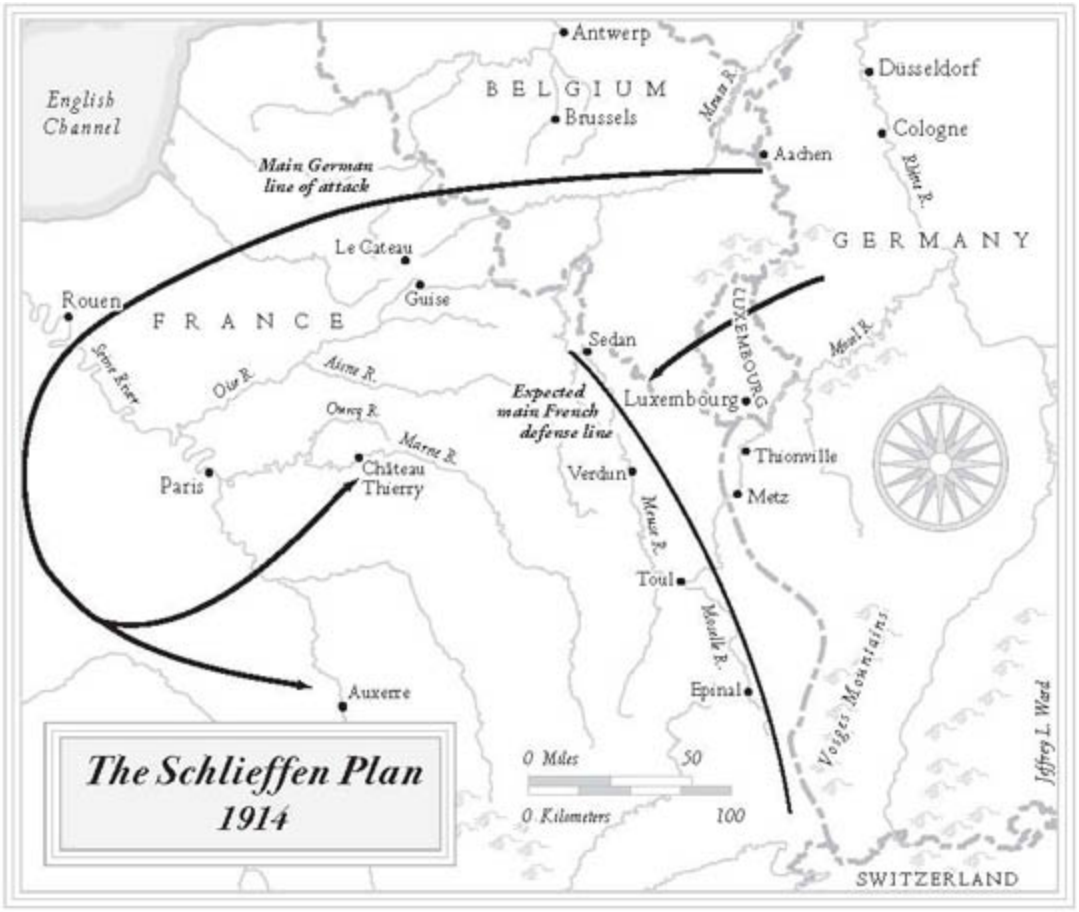
All that was needed to set off conflict was a spark. It came when a cell of Serbian terrorists bent on creating a "greater Serbia" shot the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife on a street in Sarajevo, Bosnia, on June 28, 1914. Austria wanted to exploit the assassinations to destroy Serbia. Germany covertly supported Austria. But Serbia was backed by Russia. After a month of intense negotiations, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and Russia mobilized. Germany tried to get Russia to restrict its troops to the Austro-Hungarian frontier, but Russia refused. Accordingly,

Germany declared war on Russia on August 1. Within a few days Britain, France, and Russia were at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The fear of a two-front war had long agonized the German General Staff. It sought a way to eliminate one threat before having to face the other. Since Russia was notoriously slow in mobilizing its forces, and since the heart of German industry was the Ruhr, just east of Holland, the impetus grew to throw up a temporary shield against Russia and to concentrate most of Germany's power to defeat France quickly and thoroughly. Then the danger of Russia could be dealt with at leisure.

But defeating France, especially since it would likely have the help of Britain, was no easy matter. With this in mind, Count Alfred von Schlieffen, chief of the General Staff from 1891 to 1906, developed plans for a *Vernichtungskrieg*, or war of annihilation. His aim was to avoid a frontal attack by a deep concentric encircling movement around the French flank in order to drive French forces into a pocket or caldron where they had to either surrender or be annihilated.

Although Schlieffen knew nothing of Sun Tzu, his idea exactly mirrored Sun Tzu's concept of combining *zheng* and *qi*. That is, Schlieffen called for one German force (*zheng*) to hold the main enemy force in place, while another German force (qi) swung around to the flank or rear of the enemy and forced his destruction.



Such an operation was impossible along the restricted frontier with France, which ran only 150 miles. French forces would be so numerous and formidable that any attack would have to be frontal, leaving little scope for a flank attack. The only alternative was to hold the main French army along the frontier with a small force (*zheng*) and to swing the main German attack (*qi*) through Belgium and Luxembourg onto the rear of the French army.

Astonishingly, Schlieffen modeled this extremely ambitious plan on a single battle—Leuthen in Silesia—fought in 1757 by Frederick the Great of Prussia. Frederick exploited the fact that Prussian troops marched faster than other armies. Consequently, he developed his “oblique order” in which a small force held the enemy army in position by threatening one wing with attack, while the main force marched on the other wing and destroyed it. At Leuthen, Prussian cavalry demonstrated against the northern flank of the Austrian army, while the Prussian infantry marched on the southern flank and rolled it up.

Schlieffen planned to use this same method on a vast scale. While a small force challenged the French in Alsace-Lorraine, inducing the French army to attack, the main German offensive was to roll over the plains of Belgium and northern France, cross the Seine River near Rouen, circle around south of Paris, then turn back to the northeast, and press onto the rear of the French armies, which had meanwhile advanced through Alsace-Lorraine to or almost to the Rhine River. Schlieffen conceived that the French armies would be caught between German masses on both sides and be forced to surrender.[3]

While an enemy commander was likely to anticipate an ordinary battlefield flanking movement, the French command was less likely to fathom an "oblique order" of attack over such a huge expanse of geography. Space could create obscurity and veil intent.

The Schlieffen Plan called for concentrating the vast bulk of German strength on this great right-hand pincer movement. Of the seventy-two German divisions expected to be available, fifty-three were to be allocated to this wing, ten to form a pivot around Verdun, and only nine to be held in Alsace-Lorraine along the French frontier. Schlieffen's object was to keep the German left wing so weak that the French would be encouraged to attack. The farther the French drove forward, the more difficult it would be to extricate their forces when the German flanking movement swept onto their rear.

By happenstance, the French were about to play into German hands. In the years shortly before the war, a new school of theorists, led by Ferdinand Foch, had become fixated on the idea that wars could be won by quick offensive action. The school preached that the French would be bound to win if they attacked forcefully. French obsession with this *offensive à outrance*, or all-out attack, paid no attention to the lessons learned in the American Civil War, which proved that defensive weapons fired from behind strong field fortifications could stop practically any attack. It also ignored the developments of extremely formidable defensive weapons after the Civil War. These included the magazine bolt-action rifle, with an effective range of a thousand yards; the machine gun, perfected by Hiram Maxim in 1884; much more powerful explosives, commencing with Alfred Nobel's dynamite, invented in 1866; and quick-firing artillery

equipped with newly developed hydraulic recoil mechanisms, which could launch shells miles from the front lines (and thus were invulnerable to enemy rifle and machine-gun fire).

Although the Schlieffen Plan was an essential part of German strategy to survive a two-front war, Helmuth von Moltke, who became chief of staff in 1906, did not understand it. No one in the German leadership had any inkling of this astounding fact. Moltke was the nephew of the like-named Helmuth von Moltke, the brilliant Prussian chief of staff who had led Germany to unification in 1871. The younger Moltke's military training had been of the best, and his credentials were impeccable. Everyone assumed that Moltke understood warfare in general and Germany's secret military plans in particular. But this was not true. Because selection of leaders depends on many factors, which can vary as circumstances vary, individuals incapable of understanding warfare can become senior leaders. Moltke was such an officer.

Only a tiny fraction of Germany's leaders were privy to the Schlieffen Plan, and no one raised suspicions when Moltke began altering the plan in the years prior to the war. Of nine new divisions that became available, he allocated eight to the left wing and only one to the right. When the war started, he altered the plan even more.

Moltke sent forward only thirty-four divisions—not the fifty-three Schlieffen had planned—in three armies (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) through Belgium to commence the wide-arcing advance. Against them the French had only thirteen divisions in the 5th Army, plus the small four-division British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The German advance should have progressed with little trouble, because the Allies thought the Germans were aiming straight at Paris, and left the extreme west virtually undefended. Thus, the path was almost wholly open for the Germans to swing well to the west and to avoid the French and British forces.

But Moltke began making profound blunders from the start. He diverted seven divisions from the western wing to stand guard over the Belgian army and to seize the old French fortresses of Givet and Maubeuge. The Belgians had withdrawn to Antwerp and were interested only in their preservation, not attacking the German army. The old fortresses were useless for holding up the German advance and could easily have been left to follow-on reserve troops. Moltke also sent another four divisions to East

Prussia, to aid in stopping the Russians, though they were not needed and had not been called for.

At the same time, it became clear that Moltke had neglected to explain the Schlieffen Plan to the commanders of the three German armies on the west. They didn't understand what the plan called for, and instead of trying to avoid the French and British forces, they continually attacked them head-on.

Alexander von Kluck's German 1st Army collided with the BEF at Le Cateau in northern France in a full-scale attack on August 25–27. The BEF fought off a double envelopment by Kluck's entire army. It was the biggest British battle since Waterloo. The 40,000 British troops succeeded in disengaging, but the BEF suffered 7,800 casualties.

To relieve pressure on the BEF, the French 5th Army fought a series of successful engagements around Guise, fifteen miles south of Le Cateau, on August 29. These collisions caused the German armies to shift their direction directly against the defending French forces.

Meanwhile, as the Germans advanced into Belgium, the French launched an offensive into Lorraine on August 14, 1914, with nineteen divisions, just as Schlieffen had anticipated. Departing radically from Schlieffen's plan, however, Moltke diverted six newly formed divisions to this wing. They should have gone to strengthening the western wing. He also allowed the commander of the eastern wing, Rupprecht Maria Luitpold Ferdinand, crown prince of Bavaria, to go over to the attack himself. This violated the entire premise on which the Schlieffen Plan was based, namely, that the eastern wing at first should *withdraw* to lure the French into advancing.

The French forces were overwhelmed by August 20 not only by powerful German forces but also by the utterly false idea that offensive spirit could overcome machine-gun bullets and fast-firing artillery shells. The nineteen French divisions were shattered, and the few survivors fell back on the Vosges Mountains and the French fortress chain based in Epinal, Toul, and Verdun. Here French reserves easily repulsed Prince Rupprecht's further attacks. The French were able to send troops to form a new 6th Army to reinforce the French western flank.

Now Moltke made the fatal mistake that destroyed any hope of carrying out the Schlieffen Plan. The German western wing, continuing to

ignore Schlieffen's directive to keep moving to the west and south, was marching southeast, colliding with French forces every step of the way.

Instead of ordering the wing to return to its original path and to swing around these enemy forces, Moltke abruptly changed the entire strategy. On August 28, 1914, he told the armies that the objective of the campaign "must be to advance as rapidly as possible on Paris, not to give the French army time to recover, to prevent it from forming fresh units, and to take from France as many of its means of defense as possible."[4] In other words, Moltke outlined a policy of direct attack that was completely at odds with the Schlieffen Plan. Instead of going *around* any resistance that materialized, Moltke ordered the 2nd and 3rd Armies to attack the enemy frontally.

Only the 1st Army on the extreme west was to continue the original plan. Moltke ordered it to move in a southwesterly direction on a path that would lead about twenty-five miles west of Paris. But he told the 2nd Army to advance directly on Paris, and the 3rd Army to turn southeast to Château-Thierry on the Marne River fifty-five miles east of Paris. Moltke foreshadowed his real intent by adding that it might be necessary to abandon the flanking movement altogether and wheel the 1st Army directly south if the enemy put up strong resistance on the Marne.

These actions proved that Moltke did not understand the Schlieffen Plan at all. He had entirely missed the significance of a wide sweep to the west to avoid enemy forces and to allow the west wing to get south of Paris without resistance, so it then could move up on the rear of the French armies defending the German frontier. Instead, he charged directly *into* the heart of Allied resistance.

In the event, the German 2nd and 3rd Armies moved well to the east of Château-Thierry, creating a gap of several miles between the 1st and 2nd Armies. The final destruction of the Schlieffen Plan was accomplished by Kluck, commander of the 1st Army. When Karl von Bülow, commander of the 2nd Army, asked for assistance to help push back the French, Kluck, with the ready approval of Moltke, complied at once, turning eastward on August 31. In doing so, Kluck exposed his right flank. He also abandoned the concept of swinging around west and south of Paris. This ended the envelopment and sent the entire western wing of the German army into a

direct assault against emplaced French forces along the Marne. It was a total renunciation of the Schlieffen Plan and played directly into the hands of the French and British defenders.

On September 5, the French 6th Army, which had been assembling in Paris, advanced on Kluck's right flank along the Ourcq River, a tributary to the Marne, about thirty-five miles northeast of Paris and about twenty miles west of Château-Thierry. Quick action by Kluck's right-flank corps commander, Hans von Gronau, saved the 1st Army from envelopment. Kluck did not realize the danger immediately, but by September 7 he had grasped it and turned his whole army westward in a savage counterattack that forced the 6th Army on the defensive. Only the arrival of 6,000 reinforcements from Paris, carried by 600 Parisian taxicabs, permitted the 6th Army commander, Michel Maunoury, to stem the German advance.

Kluck's shift westward widened the already existing gap between the 1st and 2nd Armies to thirty miles. Kluck was not worried, because the 70,000-man BEF under Sir John French, which was supposed to have covered this gap, had been retreating at full speed since the battle of Le Cateau, and was well south of the Marne. But on September 7, the BEF at last turned about and commenced a slow advance northward, threatening to move between the German 1st and 2nd Armies. Fighting now became general along the Marne, with the three German armies colliding with the French 6th and 5th Armies and another new French army, the 9th, on the east. Schlieffen had intended a bloodless sweep around the Allied armies. What the campaign had become, through the stupidity of Moltke, was a headlong confrontation with the Allied armies.

Moltke was getting few reports from the front. Worried by rumors and pessimistic fragmentary messages, he sent an officer from his staff, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Hentsch, to inspect the front on September 8. Hentsch's orders were verbal, and they remain somewhat a mystery. But Moltke gave this junior officer full authority to issue orders in the chief of staff's name. Hentsch arrived at 2nd Army headquarters just as news came in that the right flank of the army was being turned by a vigorous night attack by Franchet d'Espèrey's French 5th Army. Bülow was about to retreat. Kluck was making headway against Maunoury's 6th Army on the northwest, but the BEF's threatened advance into the gap between both armies imperiled Kluck's left and rear.

Hentsch approved Bülow's retreat, and later the same day, in Moltke's name, he ordered the 1st Army to withdraw as well. Moltke now realized that his offensive had failed, and he ordered a general retirement to the Aisne River, some thirty miles north. This was an unnecessary retreat. The German armies could easily have contained the Allied advances. But the withdrawal was actually the most sensible action. Since Moltke had already destroyed any possibility of carrying out the Schlieffen Plan, backing up to the Aisne allowed the Germans to construct a solid defensive line and reorganize their forces.

Moltke is said to have reported to Kaiser Wilhelm II after the battle, "Your Majesty, we have lost the war." This was the truth, though it took both sides four years and millions of casualties to realize it. Once the Germans were stopped, the Allies were able to throw up defensive entrenchments, and the war of movement quickly ended. On September 14, Kaiser Wilhelm relieved Moltke and replaced him with General Erich von Falkenhayn.

Thereafter ensued the "race to the sea" as each side tried to go around the other's western flank, finally ending on the Strait of Dover at Nieuwpoort, Belgium, a few miles east of the French port of Dunkirk. At the same time, the defensive front extended eastward as well, becoming a continuous line of entrenchments from Switzerland to Belgium and ending mobility in the West. This line of trenches soon solidified into a rigid, almost impenetrable complex of field fortifications backed by machine guns and massed artillery. Neither side thereafter could open enough space to reinstitute a war of movement.

The defeat on the Marne was one of the most decisive battles in world history. If it had ended differently, the course of the twentieth century would have been altered fundamentally. The outcome was due to Moltke's total misunderstanding of Schlieffen's strategy. Through his inept generalship he ruined a brilliant plan that, if carried out correctly, almost certainly would have succeeded.

But this was not the prevailing opinion that came out of the war. Because the German offensive was widely advertised as being the Schlieffen Plan, and because the offensive had ended in disaster, most observers concluded that the plan itself was at fault. Few knew that it was not the plan, but Moltke's implementation of it, that had failed.

The concept of a wide-ranging strategic offensive fell out of favor in the years after 1918. This attitude was most prevalent among the winning generals on the Allied side. They discouraged imaginative thinking and choked off new ideas. Military theory in Britain, France, and the United States focused on the meticulous method of attack that the Allies had worked out in the war. Attacks were preceded by heavy bombardment of enemy positions, followed by a "rolling barrage" of shellfire that stayed ahead of the infantry who came out of their trenches and advanced behind the shell blasts.[5] The method was a form of direct attack and of attrition warfare, designed to wear down the enemy. Though it often was successful, it caused immense casualties and was incapable of achieving complete breakthroughs. Advances were slow because shellfire shattered towns and villages and cratered the landscape, virtually prohibiting wheeled transport. This gave the enemy time to throw up new barriers to block further advances.

Nevertheless, most Allied commanders concluded that continuous trench lines and field fortifications would extend along an entire front in future wars, and that such lines could be broken or pushed back only by the "rolling barrage" attack system. Accordingly, they went into World War II in 1939 with the idea of repeating the methods of painstaking advance they had followed in the previous war.

Leaders of the defeated German army did not want to duplicate the failed results of World War I, but they were as conservative as Allied commanders and continued to think in terms of long main lines of resistance and painstaking attacks with infantry and artillery to gain small objectives.

However, a few inventive thinkers in the German army had not been deceived into believing the Schlieffen Plan had failed because its concept was wrong. They sought ways to circumvent the continuous trench lines of World War I and to return to mobile warfare. They saw the answer in the further development of the "storm troop" or "infiltration" tactics that the Germans had developed during the war. In this method, one small group of soldiers held down an enemy trench position or strong point with heavy directed fire.[6] This was Sun Tzu's orthodox *zheng*, or holding, force. Once the enemy was driven under cover, one or more well-trained teams of eight

to twelve “storm troopers” (Sun Tzu’s unorthodox *qi*, or flanking, force) infiltrated the trench line or sneaked up on the strong point, and “rolled it up” with grenades and small-arms fire. This system could be extended to several storm troop teams operating together to attack a fairly large sector.

Storm troopers finally solved the problem of assault that had stymied commanders in the Civil War, because they eliminated military formations altogether and gave soldiers specific assignments. The system became the standard “fire-and-maneuver” tactical method that armies use to this day. It overcame enemy guns and fortifications and returned movement to the battlefield.

But the storm troopers had not won the war for Germany. Although they could occasionally break the enemy line, they moved on foot and could not advance fast enough to create a strategic penetration before enemy forces coming up on railways could close the gap.

One additional element was needed. In the years after the war, the small group of original thinkers recognized that the *zheng* and *qi* tactics of the storm troops could be exploited by creating divisions of fast-moving tanks and motorized forces that could penetrate a breach faster than enemy reinforcements could seal it. It was a brand new idea, but it was to bring mobility back to warfare.

SEVEN

German Victory in the West, 1940

One of the most successful applications of the Sun Tzu axiom to avoid strength and strike at weakness occurred when Nazi Germany overran the Low Countries, defeated France, and ousted Britain from the Continent in six weeks in 1940. The Germans feinted with a massive decoy attack into northern Belgium and Holland, which drew in most of the mobile Allied forces. Meanwhile, the actual strategic advance went almost unnoticed through the heavily forested Ardennes Mountains of eastern Belgium and Luxembourg and emerged at Sedan, France, *behind* the Allied armies.

The Allies were totally surprised. They had not anticipated a main blow through the Ardennes. In 1933, Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, then minister of war and a hero of World War I, had told the French Senate that the Ardennes could not be crossed by substantial German forces.

The Germans' success created an almost uncontested path to the English Channel 160 miles away. When they arrived, they cut off all of the Allied armies in Belgium. Most surrendered, but—because of the inexplicable refusal of the German dictator, Adolf Hitler, to allow his armor to seize Dunkirk—the British were able to evacuate their Expeditionary Force, along with 120,000 French soldiers.

The campaign nevertheless was the greatest victory in the twentieth century. But it did not win the war for Germany because Hitler completely

misunderstood its significance and squandered its fruits.[1]

The German plan was the brainchild of a low-ranking fifty-three-year-old major general, Erich von Manstein. His ideas were rejected by the German high command, which wanted to fight a war very much like the one it had lost in World War I. It was only through the intervention of three even lower-ranking German officers that Manstein's ideas were brought to the attention of Hitler. He ordered their implementation, but he did not grasp their scope.

Although Manstein knew nothing about Sun Tzu, he was a brilliant strategist, and he arrived on his own at one of Sun Tzu's most fundamental concepts: "make an uproar in the east but attack in the west." Manstein saw that deception is the most dependable way of achieving victory. By staging an "uproar" at one place, a general can induce his enemy to commit his strongest forces there, and thereby ensure that the general's actual target somewhere else will be poorly defended or not defended at all.[2]

Manstein's idea was not original. It goes back to the beginning of warfare and is the intellectual foundation of Sun Tzu's concept of the orthodox, or direct, *zheng* force working in conjunction with the unorthodox, or indirect, *qi* force.

Germany's original plan was extremely modest. It aimed only to defeat large portions of the Allied armies and gain territory in Holland, Belgium, and northern France "for successful air and sea operations against Britain and as a broad protective zone for the Ruhr" industrial region east of Holland.[3]

This was not a sensible plan. The Allies already anticipated that the Germans would come through Belgium because a direct attack across the French frontier was impracticable. In the 1930s France had constructed the Maginot Line from Switzerland to Luxembourg, a barrier of interconnected reinforced concrete fortifications and casemated cannons that could be overcome only by direct attack, if at all, and with catastrophic troop losses.

Once the Germans moved into Belgium, the Allies intended to throw forward nearly all of their mobile formations to meet the Germans along the north-flowing Dyle River, a few miles east of Brussels. At best the Germans

could expect to drive the Allies back to the westward-flowing Somme River in northern France, but not achieve a decision in the war.

When Manstein, chief of staff for Army Group A, saw the German plan in October 1939, he declared that it would be a crime to use the German army for a partial victory, leading to a long war of attrition. Since the Allies had command of the sea, they had access to resources from Asia, Africa, and America. Blockaded Germany did not and therefore would likely lose a long war of attrition.

Manstein proposed that a major attack be launched in northern Belgium and Holland to bait the Allied armies, but that the main effort be shifted to the Ardennes—and that the attack be conducted almost entirely by the new German panzer, or armored, divisions, supported by a new aerial weapon, the Stuka dive bomber. Neither the commander of the German army, Walther von Brauchitsch, nor the chief of staff, Franz Halder, recognized the revolutionary impact of these two weapons, however. They also did not believe that tanks could break through the Ardennes or cross the deep Meuse River at Sedan without massive infantry and artillery support.

Orthodox German thinking followed closely the Allied doctrine developed in World War I. It held that tanks should assist infantry in carrying out assaults *on foot* against enemy objectives. Accordingly, the British and French put their emphasis on short-range, heavily armored monsters—like the British Matilda and the French Char B—that could deflect most enemy fire but moved at about the pace of a walking infantryman. Allied commanders believed any enemy breakthrough would take place on a narrow front, and they could move up individual tanks, along with infantry and artillery, to seal it. They had many more tanks than the Germans, which they largely spread in “penny packets” among their infantry divisions. Thus the French and to a large degree the British were aiming to fight the same sort of war they had fought in World War I.

French army doctrine required a continuous front, strongly manned by infantry and backed up by artillery. The French expected the enemy to attack this front fruitlessly and wear down his strength. Only when the enemy was stopped did doctrine permit the French to go over to the offensive.

When the infantry attack started, it had to come behind a massive artillery barrage. The foot soldiers could advance only 1,600 yards before stopping to allow the artillery to shift its fires. After several such bounds, they had to stop until the guns could be moved forward. All this required a great deal of time.

Heinz Guderian, the German officer who founded the German armored force, thought this method of warfare was hopelessly outmoded. He had built the panzer arm on the teachings of two English experts, J. F. C. Fuller and Basil H. Liddell Hart. During the 1920s, they developed very advanced concepts of concentrating armor into large units. Their ideas made little impact on British military thinking, however, and Guderian's similar ideas did not much interest the German high command.

But Adolf Hitler expressed enthusiasm for tanks shortly after he came to power in 1933. This gave Guderian the opening to induce the army to put all armor into panzer divisions. He also convinced the German high command to adopt only long-range tanks that were "fast runners." These tanks had less armor than French and British tanks, but they could travel at twenty-five to thirty miles an hour. They could make quick penetrations into the enemy rear and keep on going.

Guderian added greatly to the power of the panzers by inducing the high command to include motorized infantry, artillery, and engineers in every panzer division. Thus all arms could work together in battle groups, and they could advance at the same speed as the tanks.

Guderian preached a new doctrine that panzer divisions alone, or with the help of dive bombers, could penetrate any enemy main line of resistance. Erwin Rommel, who was to become famous as a panzer leader, produced the best one-sentence description of the theory: "The art of concentrating strength at one point, forcing a breakthrough, rolling up and securing the flanks on either side, and then penetrating like lightning deep into the enemy's rear, before he has had time to react."[4]

The whole concept was a speeded-up version of the storm troops developed by lower-ranking German officers in World War I. They figured how to break through enemy trench lines by laying down heavy fire on a particular point, while one or more teams of *Stosstruppen*, or storm troopers, infiltrated the trench line and "rolled it up" with grenades and

small-arms fire. The *Stosstruppen* had not won the war because they advanced on foot, and the Allies were always able to close the gaps with troops brought up by railways. Guderian saw that this fatal flaw could be overcome by using panzers. Unlike the storm troopers, they could keep on going, disrupting the enemy's entire main line of resistance.

The Junker Ju 87B Stuka dive bomber was a slow (240 mph) aircraft, but it could make pinpoint attacks on enemy battlefield positions and could serve the same purpose as artillery. The Allies had seen no need for a dive bomber. Their bombers were designed to drop bombs over a wide area, not strike individual targets.

Manstein and Guderian were certain that the Meuse River could be breached quickly at Sedan with only panzer divisions and Luftwaffe (German air force) bombers. They believed the French would not have time to bring up enough troops or guns to stop them. Speed would ensure that few enemy units would be in place to block the panzers as they drove right across France to the English Channel.

But the army high command, the *Oberkommando des Heeres*, or OKH, refused to accept Manstein's proposal. As Manstein continued to bombard OKH with his argument, Halder reassigned Manstein to command a new infantry corps that had only a minor role in the upcoming campaign. That would take care of Manstein and his ideas, Halder thought.

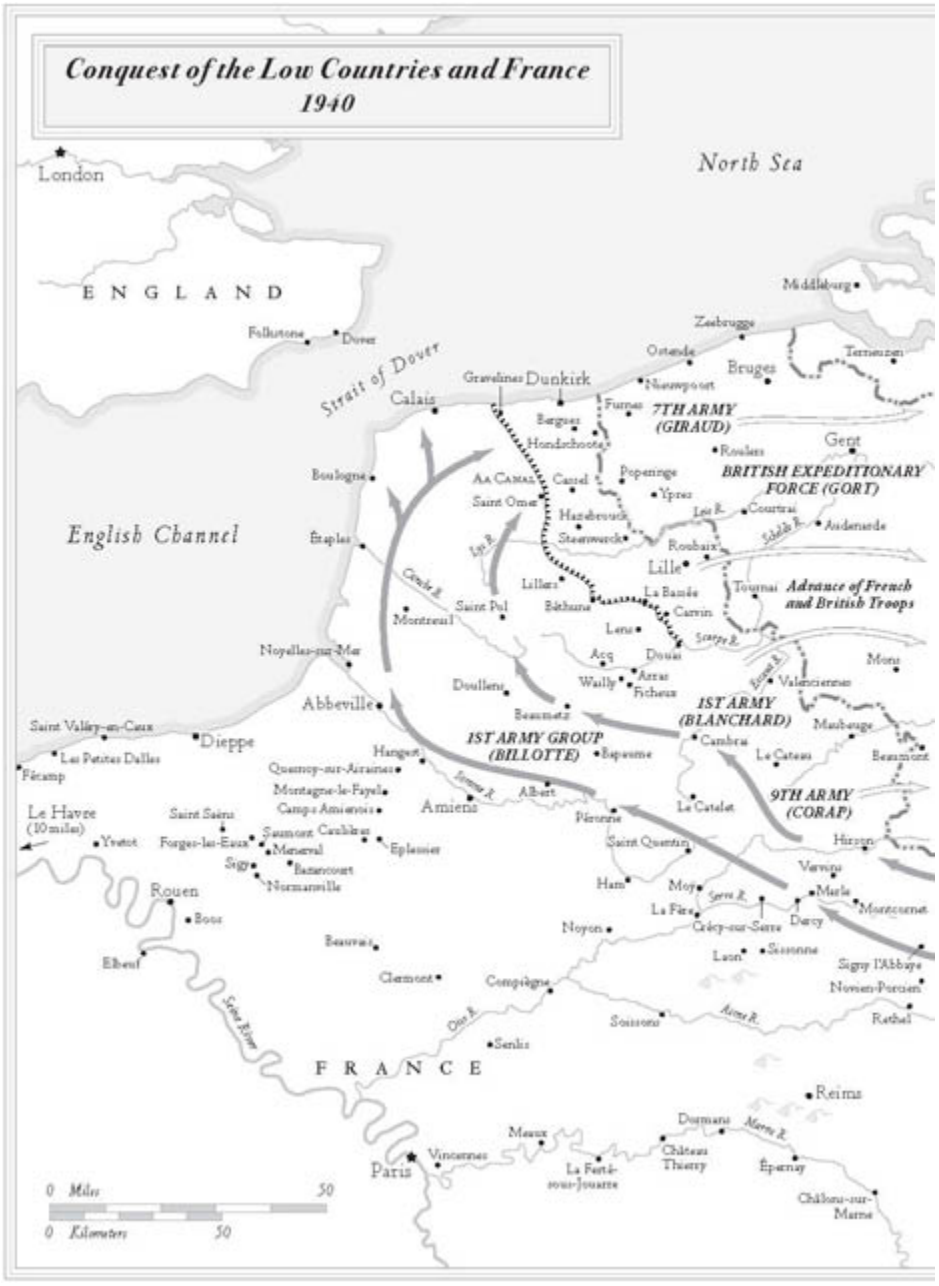
Back at Army Group A's headquarters in Koblenz, however, two of Manstein's assistants rose in revolt. When Hitler's chief military aide, Colonel Rudolf Schmundt, visited in late January 1940, Colonel Günther Blumentritt and Major Henning von Tresckow laid Manstein's whole idea out to him.

Schmundt explained the ideas to Hitler. He liked them, but to ensure their acceptance, Schmundt engineered a "working breakfast" with Hitler and five new corps commanders, including Manstein, along with Rommel, who had just been named commander of the 7th Panzer Division. After the breakfast, Manstein explained the whole idea to Hitler. The dictator accepted the concept and ordered its implementation.

In the OKH's final plan, Army Group B was to make an "uproar" north of the Liège-Charleroi line to draw as many Allied elements toward it

as possible. Meanwhile, Army Group A was to make the real attack through eastern Belgium and Luxembourg south of this line.

Of Germany's ten panzer divisions, OKH allocated seven (with 1,800 of Germany's 2,400 tanks) to Army Group A. Lieutenant General Heinz Guderian's 19th Corps with three panzer divisions (1st, 2nd, and 10th) had the primary task of thrusting through the Ardennes to emerge at Sedan. Major General Hans Reinhardt's 41st Panzer Corps with two panzer divisions was to strike Monthermé on the Meuse a few miles north of Sedan. Lieutenant General Hermann Hoth's 15th Panzer Corps with two panzer divisions, one of them Erwin Rommel's 7th, was to cross the Meuse at Dinant about forty miles north of Sedan, with the aim of shielding any effort by the Allies to strike southward.


Conquest of the Low Countries and France
1940
North Sea
London
ENGLAND
Middelburg
Zeebrugge
Ostende
Bruges
Terneuzen
Folkstone
Dover
Strait of Dover
Gravelines
Dunkirk
Nieuwpoort
Calais
Furnes
7TH ARMY (GIRAUD)
Bergues
Hondschoote
Roulers
Gent
Boulogne
Aa Canal
Cassel
Poperinge
Ypres
BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (GORT)
Saint Omer
Lys R.
Courtrai
Haze brouck
Audenarde
English Channel
Steenwerck
Roubaix
Schelde R.
Calais
Lille
Lys R.
Lillers
La Bassée
Tournai
Advance of French and British Troops
Gravelines R.
Saint Pol
Béthune
Carvin
Montreuil
Lens
Scarpe R.
Noyelles-sur-Mer
Aeq
Douai
Mons
Wailly
Arras
Escaut R.
Valenciennes
Doullens
Ficheux
Abbeville
1ST ARMY (BLANCHARD)
Beaumetz
Maubeuge
Saint Valéry-en-Caux
Dieppe
1ST ARMY GROUP (BILLOTTE)
Bapaume
Cambrai
Le Cateau
Beaumont
Les Petites Dalles
Hangest
Fécamp
Quesnoy-sur-Airaines
Somme R.
Albert
Montagne-le-Fayel
Le Catelet
9TH ARMY (CORAP)
Le Havre (10 miles)
Saint Saëns
Amiens
Péronne
Hirson
Yvetot
Forges-les-Eaux
Saumont Castleau
Eplessier
Saint Quentin
Vervins
Meneval
Sigy
Batencourt
Ham
Mons
Marle
Normanville
Serre R.
La Fère
Montcornet
Rouen
Crécy-sur-Serre
Darcy
Bous
Noyon
Beauvais
Laon
Soissons
Elbeuf
Clermont
Compiègne
Signy l'Abbaye
Novion-Porcien
Oise R.
Aisne R.
Rethel
Seine River
Senlis
FRANCE
Reims
Dormans
Marne R.
Meaux
Château Thierry
Epernay
Paris
Vincennes
La Ferté-sous-Jouarre
Châlons-sur-Marne
0 Miles 50
0 Kilometers 50

But the final OKH directive still did not embody Manstein's and Guderian's injunction that the panzers must push for the English Channel immediately after crossing the Meuse. Halder considered it indispensable first to secure bridgeheads over the river by moving up infantry divisions after the panzers crossed. But delaying ran the risk of giving away the opportunity of encircling the Allied wing in Belgium. The great question, therefore, was what Guderian would do when he crossed the Meuse. Would

he follow orders and stop, or would he defy orders and strike out for the English Channel?

Early on the morning of May 10, 1940, the Germans delivered sensational blows in Holland and northern Belgium. The Allied supreme commander, General Maurice Gamelin, at once ordered the French 1st Army and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of nine divisions under John Standish Verecker, Viscount Gort (Lord Gort), to rush to the

Dyle River. Gamelin also ordered the French 7th Army to rush to Breda, about thirty miles southeast of Rotterdam, intending to link up with the Dutch.

The event that created the greatest "uproar" in the north—the frenzied reports of which drove people all over the world to cluster transfixed around their radios—was the sudden descent of 4,000 German paratroops into "Fortress Holland" around The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Moerdijk. It was the first great airborne invasion in history. The paratroops grabbed four airports, allowing a 12,000-man air-landing division to arrive by transport aircraft. The Germans captured the key bridges in the region and were able to hold them until the 9th Panzer Division broke through the frontier and rushed to the bridges. The Dutch now had no possibility of resisting, and surrendered on May 15, 1940, forcing the French 7th Army to withdraw to Antwerp, Belgium.

Other paratroops seized bridges over the Albert Canal near Maastricht and descended by glider on the undefended roof of the Belgian fortress Eben Emael, five miles south of Maastricht. The troopers sealed the gun ports and imprisoned the garrison, which surrendered the next day.

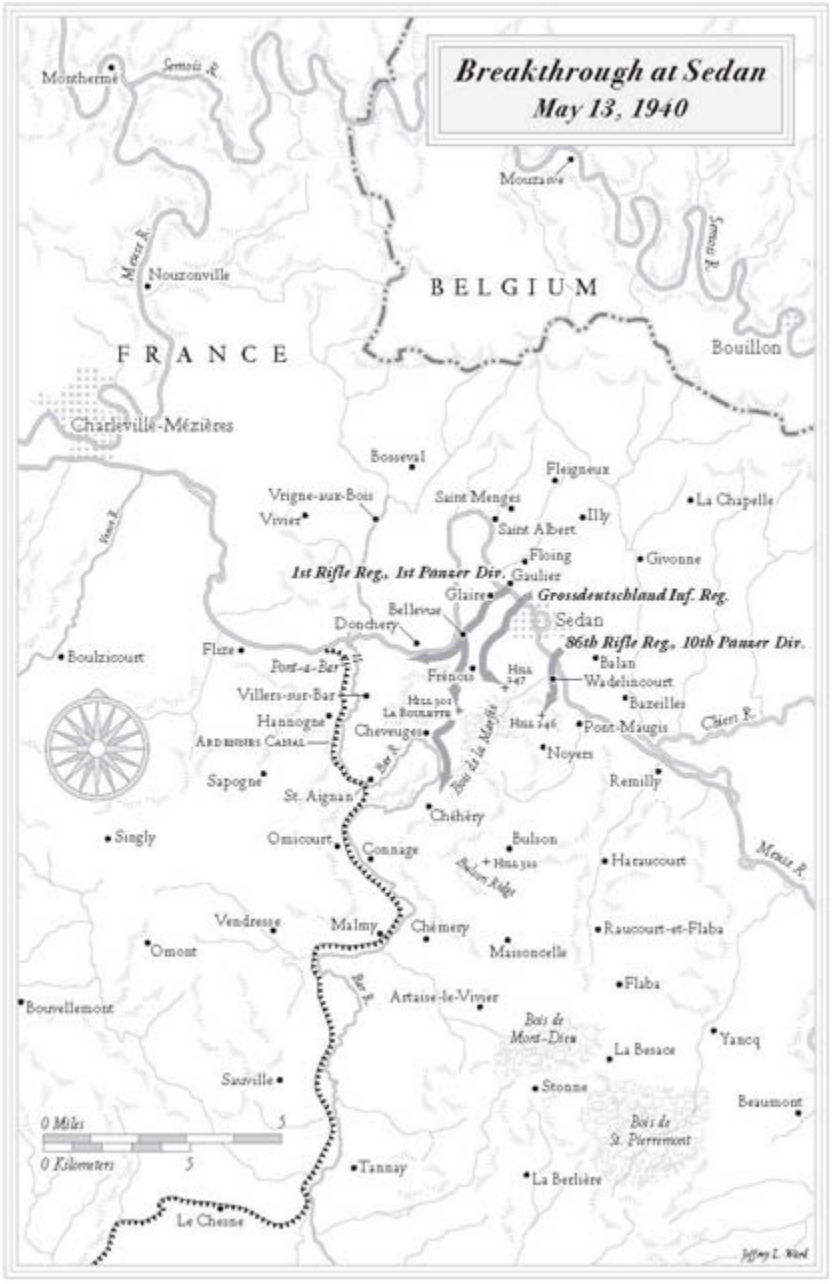
Led by Erich Hoepner's 16th Panzer Corps of two divisions (the 3rd and 4th), the German 6th Army encircled the Belgian fortress of Liège and pressed the Allies to Antwerp and to their defensive line along the Dyle River. The German 18th Army, which had moved into Holland, turned on Antwerp as soon as the Dutch surrendered, and evicted the 7th Army. The French cavalry that had advanced east of the Meuse to slow the Germans made little impression and withdrew behind the main Allied positions.

Thirteen French infantry divisions, with 800 tanks scattered in small groups among the units, moved up to hold the "Gembloux gap," the twenty-mile space between Wavre on the Dyle and Namur on the Meuse. A two-division French "Cavalry Corps" with 400 tanks lined up to challenge

Hoepner's panzers around the village of Hannut, a few miles northeast of Gembloux.[5] Although the French commander had spread out his tanks in a long line, which made it impossible for them to work in concert, they nevertheless stopped the first German panzers. When more German tanks came up, however, the commanders saw the weakness of the French dispositions, concentrated their tanks at one point, broke through, and shattered the entire line along the Gembloux gap.

The Belgians and the Allies fell back to the Schelde River, forty to fifty miles west. The German high command didn't want to hurry the Allies into too rapid a retreat before the net had been stretched across their rear. Accordingly, it took Hoepner's panzer corps away to back up the drive through the Ardennes, and also withdrew Luftwaffe support.

While the world's attention was riveted on the breathtaking battles in Belgium and Holland, the actual Schwerpunkt, or center of gravity of the German offensive, plunged almost unnoticed through the Ardennes toward Sedan and the weakest point of the French line, sixty miles away. The leading element was the 1st Panzer Division of Guderian's corps. Allied air power ignored the movement.



The 1st Panzer Division encountered only sporadic resistance and seized the north bank of the Meuse at Sedan on the evening of May 12. The French defenders were stunned and were unprepared the next day when Guderian's infantry crossed the river in rubber boats, helped by a massive bombardment by Luftwaffe bombers. The infantry penetrated more than five miles south by the end of the day. But it took until the morning of May 14 before the Germans finished a pontoon bridge and got the first tanks across.

Reinhardt's 41st Panzer Corps gained a narrow foothold across the Meuse at Monthermé. But the terrain was extremely steep there, and Reinhardt had a hard time holding on under strong French pressure. Rommel's 7th Panzer Division, on the other hand, forced a large breach farther north at Dinant.

Guderian pressed to get as many tanks and guns as possible across his one pontoon bridge. He assumed the French were rushing reinforcements forward for a powerful counterattack. But the French command had been so distracted by the unexpected appearance of a major force at Sedan that its response was extremely slow. Only forty French tanks and a single infantry regiment moved forward at 7:00 a.m. on May 14 to attack the 1st Panzer's infantry around Bulson, about five miles south of Sedan. The Germans slowed the French long enough for the first German tanks and guns to come up. By 10:45 a.m., few of the French tanks remained, and the surviving tanks and infantry retreated rapidly south.

Meanwhile British and French aircraft tried bravely to destroy the pontoon bridge at Sedan, but lacking dive bombers, they were unable to hit that pinpoint target and lost many aircraft to German antiaircraft fire.

German infantry were approaching high ground at Stonne, about ten miles south of Sedan. This ridge dominated the country to the south and guarded the Meuse crossings. Guderian turned over capture of Stonne to Gustav von Wietersheim, whose two motorized divisions of his 14th Corps were still caught in traffic in the Ardennes. Guderian left the 10th Panzer Division and the attached Grossdeutschland Infantry Regiment to secure Stonne.

Guderian met with the commanders of the 1st and 2nd Panzer Divisions. With their eager concurrence, he ignored Halder's orders to halt and wait for the infantry divisions to catch up, and ordered the panzers to turn west, break through the French defenses, and drive full out for the coast. Guderian saw that the French were paralyzed by the speed of the German advance. He resolved to follow the idea of Manstein, to strike without pause for the English Channel and total victory.

The same evening, General André Corap, commanding the French 9th Army, the only force now blocking the panzers, made a fatal mistake and ordered the entire army to abandon the Meuse and withdraw to a new line some fifteen to twenty miles to the west. He made this decision not only

because of the breakthrough at Sedan, but also in response to reports that "thousands" of tanks were pouring through Rommel's breach at Dinant, although Hoth's entire corps counted only 542 tanks.

When the French arrived on the new line, Rommel's and Guderian's panzers were already in some of the positions the 9th Army was supposed to occupy, while the withdrawal opened the way for Reinhardt, whose tanks drove westward along an unobstructed path, shattering the 9th Army's dispositions and throwing the army into chaos.

On May 16, the new British prime minister, Winston Churchill, arrived in Paris to find panic setting in. Staff in government offices were burning their papers, expecting the capital to fall at any moment. The turmoil slowly abated as word spread that the panzers were heading west, not toward Paris. In a meeting with the French premier, Paul Reynaud, and Churchill, General Gamelin reported that he had no more reserves, and no ideas on how to stop the Germans.

Reynaud took over the defense establishment, relieved Gamelin, and appointed General Maxime Weygand, who had just arrived from Syria, to command the armies. He also named the ambassador to Spain, Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, as vice premier. Weygand went to the front on May 21, but he was unable to conceive any plan to reverse the disaster unfolding. The fundamental reason was that the French command structure was too rigid and too slow to respond to the rapidly moving panzers. The plans it developed were out of date well before they could be transmitted to the troops and carried out in the field.

Guderian's and Reinhardt's panzers were rolling toward the English Channel against virtually no opposition. On the roads, panicked civilians and fleeing soldiers were all mixed together, creating chaos. Infantry divisions had relieved the mobile forces fighting for the Stonne heights, but Wietersheim was having a difficult time getting his motorized divisions forward to seal the flanks. Rundstedt was doing everything possible to bring forward the infantry divisions, but they were marching on foot and the pace was slow. To the orthodox soldiers who made up the German high

command, dangers threatened the flanks with every mile that the panzers pressed westward.

The German generals were as bewildered by the pace of the advance as the Allies. They were unable to comprehend what was actually happening. No one had ever seen anything like this. They could not understand that an unprecedented victory was unfolding, and that the speed of the panzer advance alone made it impossible for the French to respond.

Rather, they feared that a disaster was about to descend on the German army in the form of some tremendous counteroffensive launched from somewhere on the flanks. Hitler, above all, was on the verge of distraction. Despite the fact that he had approved the strategy, Manstein's (and Sun Tzu's) concepts of uproar east and attack west and of striking into weakness were entirely alien to him. Now that they were succeeding beyond his wildest imagination, he became terrified and uncertain.

Hitler hurried to see Rundstedt at Charleroi, Belgium, and urged him to be cautious. Rundstedt, a very conventional soldier, was also worried. He ordered Ewald von Kleist to stop the panzers in order for the infantry to catch up. Kleist commanded the panzer group made up of the corps of Guderian, Reinhardt, and Wietersheim.

Kleist did not convey the anxieties in the high command to his corps commanders. He simply told them to halt. But Guderian and Reinhardt saw that victory could be ensured only if they continued to drive west at full throttle and not give the confused French a chance to draw a breath, assemble their scattered forces, and actually launch a strike on the flank.

After a heated argument with Kleist, Guderian was able to get him to allow the advance to continue for another twenty-four hours. Guderian then ordered his troops to spring forward without hesitation and without stopping. By nightfall on May 16, Guderian's spearheads were at Marle and Dercy, on the Serre River fifty-five miles west of Sedan, while his and Reinhardt's reconnaissance elements were all the way to the Oise River, another fifteen miles west.

Guderian assumed that this spectacular success had quieted the fears back at headquarters, and he sent a message that he intended to continue the pursuit the next day, May 17. Early in the morning, Guderian received a radio flash that Kleist would be flying into Guderian's airstrip at Montcornet, a few miles east of Marle, at 7:00 a.m. Kleist arrived promptly,

didn’t even bid Guderian good morning, and launched into a tirade for his disobeying orders. Guderian at once asked to be relieved of his command. Kleist, taken aback, agreed and told him to turn over his command to the next-senior officer.

Guderian radioed Rundstedt’s army group to relay what had happened, and said he was flying back to report. Within minutes, a message came back telling him to stay where he was. General Wilhelm List, 12th Army commander, was coming to clear up the matter. List reinstated Guderian with Rundstedt’s approval and told Guderian that the halt order had come from Rundstedt. List was in agreement with Guderian’s desire to keep going and authorized him to make “reconnaissance in force,”[6] a subterfuge that did not defy Rundstedt’s order but slipped around it.

Deeply appreciative, Guderian unleashed his panzers, and they surged forward. Rundstedt finally called off his stop order, and the 1st Panzer Division forced a bridgehead over the Somme River near Péronne, forty miles west of Marle, on May 19.

Although the speed of the panzer drive had utterly confused the French high command, the newly formed French 4th Armored Division under Charles de Gaulle came forward on May 17 with a few tanks and attacked Montcornet. But his was only a glancing blow, and the division was severely repulsed. Throughout the campaign, neither the French nor the British were able to get organized enough to mass any substantial armored force. The unbelievable speed of the panzers so destabilized Allied decision-making that all the commanders could think to do was to hold stolidly in place, or retreat when German tanks rushed toward them. Yet, the Allies still had formidable armored strength. If they had concentrated it at a single place, they might have plunged it into the side of the German advance and brought it to a halt.

The Allies never pulled their armor together, however. The French had formed four armored divisions but wasted them in isolated engagements like de Gaulle’s attempt at Montcornet. Most of the 3rd Armored Division had been dispersed among the infantry south of the Meuse at Sedan, where it never was able to play a decisive role. The 1st had run out of fuel and had been shattered by the 5th Panzer Division just west of Dinant. Noncombatant parts of the 2nd had fled south of the Aisne River to Rethel,

while the remainder was delivered by rail to various stations in the vicinity of Hirson, and these isolated fragments were bypassed or overrun by Guderian's and Reinhardt's corps.

In Belgium, the British had ten battalions of tanks that were parceled out to the infantry divisions, as were those of the three French mechanized divisions and a number of independent French tank battalions. The French tanks assembled at Gembloux had been strung out in a long, unsupported line. Each tank, in effect, had to fight alone, or with the help of tanks nearby. Despite this atrocious tactical formation, they had performed excellently, showing what might have been achieved if they had been massed and used in a concerted attack.

Once German headquarters had released him, Guderian stopped for nothing. On May 20, the 1st Panzer seized Amiens and pressed southward to form a bridgehead four miles deep across the Somme. During the afternoon, the 2nd Panzer reached Abbeville, and that evening a battalion of the division passed through Noyelles-sur-Mer and became the first German unit to reach the Atlantic coast. Only ten days after the start of the offensive, the Allied armies had been cut in two.

After the Allies had retreated in haste from the Dyle River line, they had formed a line along the north-flowing Schelde River. Their southern flank rested at Arras, on the Scarpe River, a tributary to the Schelde. Arras was only twenty-five miles north of Péronne on the Somme. Thus the Germans had only this narrow corridor through which to feed their panzers and their offensive.

The Allies still had a chance. If they could close the gap, they could isolate the panzers, reunite the armies in Belgium with forces to the south, and bring the German offensive to a halt.

Meantime, Lord Gort, commander of the BEF, was getting worried about the safety of British forces holding Arras. He instructed Major General Harold E. Franklyn to form the 5th and 50th Infantry Divisions and the 1st Army Tank Battalion and to cut off German access to the city on May 21.

Lord Gort was losing confidence that his French allies were capable of organizing any response to the German offensive. He had already alerted

the War Office in London that he was thinking of retreating to the coast and evacuating the army back to England. This dire prospect caused the British cabinet to send General Sir Edmund Ironside, chief of the Imperial General Staff, to Belgium on May 20 to order the BEF to move south on Amiens, on the other side of the gap, and to attack all enemy forces it encountered. Given the circumstances, this was a most ridiculous order.

Lord Gort told Ironside that most British forces were trying to hold off the German 6th Army on the east, and any attack southward would have to be done in conjunction with the French. Ironside and Gort's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall, went to see General Gaston Billotte, commander of the French 1st Army Group. Billotte ordered two French divisions to attack the next day, May 21. But the French were slow and said they couldn't mount the attack until May 22.

Since the French were not ready, General Franklyn's operation to protect Arras went on as planned on May 21. Franklyn sent most of his forces to the Scarpe River east of Arras. He thought only minor German forces were south of Arras, so he ordered just two infantry battalions and fifty-eight Mark I Matilda tanks armed with only a single machine gun and sixteen Mark II Matildas armed with a high-velocity two-pounder (40-millimeter) gun to clear them out. Matildas were slow infantry tanks, but with 75 millimeters of armor they were much more resistant to enemy fire than the lighter-skinned panzers.

In fact, Rommel's 7th Panzer Division had arrived south of Arras, and he swung his tanks around northwest of Arras on the morning of May 21, with the intention of then striking for Lille, some twenty miles north. Since the division's artillery and infantry were lagging behind, Rommel rode back to urge them forward.

The British formed up west of Arras in the afternoon and attacked southeast. They ran into Rommel's isolated artillery and infantry and began to inflict heavy casualties. The Germans found their 37-millimeter antitank guns to be useless against the Matildas. The British tanks overran the antitank guns but were stopped by Rommel's frantic effort to form a "gun line" of field artillery and especially high-velocity 88-millimeter antiaircraft guns, which materialized as a devastating new weapon against Allied tanks. The artillery and the "88s" destroyed thirty-six tanks and broke the back of

the British attack. The British fell back into Arras and attempted no further attack.

The British effort had been too weak, but it showed what could have been done if commanders had mobilized a major counterattack. Nevertheless, the attack at Arras deeply alarmed the German high command, especially Adolf Hitler. Rommel's division lost 387 men, four times the number of casualties suffered until that point. The attack stunned Rundstedt. His anxiety fed Hitler's similar fears and led to momentous consequences in a few days.

On May 22, Guderian struck north from Abbeville, aiming at the English Channel ports and the rear of the British, French, and Belgian armies, which were still facing eastward against Fedor von Bock's Army Group B. Reinhardt's panzers kept pace on the east. Guderian's tanks isolated Boulogne and Calais, both of which surrendered after German attacks. This brought Guderian to Gravelines, barely ten miles from Dunkirk, the last port from which the Allies in Belgium could evacuate.

Reinhardt also arrived twenty miles from Dunkirk on the Aa (or Bassée) Canal, which ran from Douai on the Scarpe River past La Bassée and Saint-Omer to Gravelines. The panzers were now closer to Dunkirk than most of the Allies.

Meanwhile, the right flank of the BEF withdrew from Arras to La Bassée on May 23 under pressure of a thrust northward by Rommel toward Lille. On May 24, Army Group B broke the Belgian army's line at Courtrai (Kortrijk), only thirty miles from Ostend and Dunkirk, leaving a gaping hole in the Allied front. King Leopold of Belgium surrendered four days later. Despite the Belgian defection, the BEF withdrew by stages to Dunkirk.

The news of German advances had been good, but Rundstedt gave Hitler a gloomy report on the morning of May 24, laying emphasis on the tanks the Germans had lost and on the possibility that the Allies might attempt an attack bigger than the one at Arras. These fears reinforced Hitler's anxieties. Yet Guderian's, Reinhardt's, and Rommel's fast exploitations were preventing both resistance and a flank attack. The Germans had been out of danger from the first day, but to Hitler (and to most of the senior German generals) it seemed too good to be true.

There were few Allied forces in front of Guderian and Reinhardt. They had an easy task to seize Dunkirk and close off the last possible port from which the Allies could evacuate. This would force the capitulation of the entire BEF and the French 1st Group of Armies, more than 400,000 men.

On this day, May 24, the war took a bizarre and utterly bewildering turn. Rundstedt, fearful that the Allies would launch an attack on his flanks, wanted the infantry divisions to catch up with the panzers for protection. Hitler, sharing Rundstedt's paranoia, agreed and ordered the panzers to halt along the Aa Canal. Guderian and Reinhardt protested vehemently, but they received curt messages to remain where they were. While the BEF and many parts of the French armies rushed to Dunkirk, forming a solid defensive shield, and while the Royal Navy organized frantic and highly successful efforts to carry the soldiers back to England, the German panzers sat idle. It was unbelievable.

The British used every vessel they could find, 861 in all, many manned by civilian volunteers, to carry the troops away. The soldiers had to leave all of their weapons and vehicles on shore, but between May 26 and June 4 the vessels evacuated 338,000 troops, including 120,000 French (who were promptly shipped back to unoccupied France). Only a few thousand members of the French rear guard were captured.

To this day, no one has been able to fathom Hitler's decision. With victory already within his grasp, he threw it away. The BEF was the *only* army that Britain possessed. Virtually all the British army leaders were in Belgium. If the BEF had been lost, Britain would have found it virtually impossible to create another army for a very long time. At least as important, passage of this army into captivity would most probably have induced the British leadership to conclude a peace with Hitler in order to free its soldiers. Churchill was defiant, but other leaders would have been willing to make peace in order to get the men home—

especially since Hitler had already signaled that he would permit Britain to retain its navy and its empire, demanding solely that Britain grant Germany a free hand on the Continent.

Brauchitsch and Halder tried without success to get the halt order lifted. But Hitler voiced a very offhand view of the situation to Brauchitsch, saying that the Luftwaffe would foil any attempt to embark troops from

Dunkirk and would sink any boat that reached the open sea. This was manifestly not possible. The Luftwaffe had suffered heavy losses during the campaign, a fact known to all the senior chiefs. The Luftwaffe caused much damage, but it could not stop the evacuation.

The most credible explanation of Hitler's decision is that he thought the British would view evacuation as a decisive defeat that would bring them to terms. He did not see it the way the British saw it, as deliverance from certain disaster. The "miracle of Dunkirk" revived British morale and hopes for victory. But Hitler was totally self-absorbed. He stated his belief immediately after the evacuation that the British had been defeated, and that they would "come to their senses" and conclude a peace with him. Hitler could see no other point of view but his own.

Indirection and subtlety were alien to Hitler's thinking. His practice was to attack the enemy head-on. Only once did he choose an indirect method—his approval of Manstein's advance through the Ardennes. He did not see that the Germans were successful because they were avoiding enemy strength. He was incapable of understanding a doctrine like Sun Tzu's combining *zheng* direct forces with *qi* indirect forces. He followed the same headlong path for the remainder of the war, making one disastrous decision after another.

Hitler was a polar opposite of Sun Tzu. His inability to envision alternative ways of achieving his goals was the cardinal reason for his destruction.

The end in France came swiftly. In three weeks, the Germans had captured a million prisoners, while suffering 60,000 casualties. The Belgian and Dutch armies had been eliminated, and the French had lost thirty divisions, nearly a third of their total strength and the best and most mobile part. They had also lost the assistance of nine British divisions, now back in Britain, with all of their equipment gone. Only one British division and part of another remained in France south of the Somme.

General Weygand was left with sixty-six divisions, most of them understrength, to hold a front along the Somme and Aisne rivers and the Maginot Line, which was longer than the original. Most of the mechanized divisions had been lost or badly shattered. On the other hand, the Germans

quickly brought their ten panzer divisions back to strength and deployed 130 infantry divisions, only a few of which had been engaged.

OKH promoted Guderian to command a new group of two panzer corps, and ordered him to drive from Rethel on the Aisne to the Swiss frontier. Kleist kept two panzer corps to strike south from bridgeheads over the Somme at Amiens and Péronne, but these later shifted eastward to reinforce Guderian's drive. The remaining armored corps, under Hermann Hoth, was to advance between Amiens and the sea.

The offensive opened on June 5, and France collapsed quickly. Not all the breakthroughs were easy, but the panzers soon ranged across the countryside, generally avoiding or bypassing villages, towns, and forests where Weygand had set up all-around hedgehog defenses. The almost unobstructed advances created chaos and caused French soldiers to surrender by the hundreds of thousands.

One advance involved the movement of Erwin Rommel's 7th Panzer Division. On June 5 it crossed the Somme near Hangest between Abbeville and Amiens. The division already had moved so fast and materialized at points so unexpectedly that the French had named it the "ghost division." On June 6, at Quesnoy-sur-Airaines, a few miles southwest of Hangest, the entire division lined up on a 2,000-yard front, with the panzer regiment in the lead, and advanced across the country. Two days later it reached the Seine River near Rouen, a drive of seventy miles. Then Rommel turned northwest and raced to the sea at Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, where he captured most of the British 51st Highland Division, and three French divisions. Later the division raced from near Rouen to Cherbourg in the longest one-day advance in history, seizing the port shortly after the last British troops had departed.

Guderian's panzers cut off northeastern France with a rapid drive on the Swiss frontier. The troops defending the Maginot Line retreated and surrendered almost without firing a shot.

The Germans entered Paris on June 14 and reached the Rhône River valley on June 16. That same night, the French asked for an armistice. Reynaud resigned as premier and was replaced by Marshal Pétain.

Meanwhile General Alan Brooke, who had taken command of all British forces in France after Dunkirk, hurriedly evacuated 150,000 British troops, along with 18,000 French, 24,000 Poles, and 5,000 Czechs, from

numerous ports along the Atlantic coast. Many of the French joined the Free French movement under Charles de Gaulle, who had arrived in Britain, vowing to fight on against the Germans.

On June 22, the French accepted the German terms at Compiègne, a few miles north of Paris, in the same railway car where the defeated Germans had signed the armistice ending World War I in 1918. On June 25, both sides ceased fire. The greatest military victory in modern times had been achieved in six weeks.

Germany occupied northern France. In unoccupied southern France, centered around the watering spot of Vichy, a government under Marshal Pétain was set up. “Vichy France” became a collaborator with Nazi Germany.

Hitler had been unable to see how capture of the BEF could have ended the war with a spectacular victory for Germany. He was also unable to understand that he still could have parlayed his partial victory into a complete triumph. The way was plain to see—through North Africa and the Middle East. Britain was largely without weapons. It was defending the Suez Canal with only a single understrength armored division.

If Hitler had sent just four panzer divisions to Libya, a colony of his “Axis” partner, Italy, he could have occupied French North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) and seized the Suez. This would have forced the Royal Navy out of the Mediterranean, turning it into an Axis lake.

Panzers could have swept across the entire Middle East from Palestine to Iran, gaining an unlimited supply of oil, Germany’s single most-needed commodity. Turkey would have been forced to come to terms.

Occupation of Iran would have closed off Britain’s and America’s only feasible supply route to the Soviet Union. German forces in northern Iran would have been within easy striking distance of the Soviet oil fields in the Caucasus and along the shores of the Caspian Sea. Oil was mandatory to conduct modern war, and Joseph Stalin would have gone to any length to prevent a German attack on his oil. He would have supplied Germany with grain and delivered rubber, nickel, and other needed commodities from southeast Asia by means of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

In other words, Germany—by merely sending four panzer divisions into North Africa—could have neutralized the threat of the Soviet Union and created a virtually unassailable empire encompassing all of Europe west of Russia, North Africa down to Dakar in Senegal, and the Middle East.

Although a number of Hitler's advisers saw this opportunity and tried to convince him to seize it—especially his navy chief, Erich Raeder—Hitler refused. Instead he launched a headlong assault against the Soviet Union in June 1941. This was his fatal error. From that point on, Germany was on the road to disaster. Adolf Hitler understood none of the indirection reflected in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. This blindness saved the world from being dominated by one of the most malignant monsters ever to appear on earth.

EIGHT

Stalingrad, 1942

The primary reason why the Allies won World War II is that Adolf Hitler was incapable of seeing paths to victory pointed out to him by his senior commanders. These paths were consistent with the fundamental axioms laid out long ago by Sun Tzu. But in a dictatorship, the only vision that counts is that of the dictator. If he cannot see and follow the most intelligent strategies, then he will fail. Therefore, as night follows day, Germany was doomed to be torn to pieces for its crime of obeying such a mad and irresponsible leader.

The battle of Stalingrad in 1942 is one of the supreme examples in world history where a leader defiantly ignores wiser counsel and engineers his own destruction. At the end of this disastrous battle—which cost Germany 250,000 men—Allied leaders knew Hitler was incapable of making correct military judgments. They then knew they would prevail.

Hitler's military education consisted entirely of service as a private soldier, finally a corporal, in the trenches of World War I. From his point of view, war was a headlong collision of giant forces. The stronger force finally pushed back the weaker force and gained a devastated battlefield. Field Marshal Erich von Manstein perceived this defect of Hitler very clearly. "He was a man who saw fighting only in the terms of utmost brutality," Manstein wrote. "For the *art* of war he substituted brute force."[1]

Hitler never rose above this elementary and quite incomplete concept of war. For him the greatest of campaigns was nothing more than a vastly larger version of the continuous, lethal frontal attacks on the Western front.

The admonition to approach one's objective indirectly was entirely foreign to Hitler. His method was a straight test of strength. His frontal assault on Stalingrad was an absolute example of this thinking. Sun Tzu, on the other hand, abhors frontal attacks and he most especially abhors attacking "fortified cities."[2]

Hitler regarded Germany's military achievements early in the war as his own. He never gave Manstein any credit for his plan to defeat France in 1940. In Manstein's judgment, Hitler's misplaced self-congratulation caused him to lose all sense of proportion in assessing his own capabilities. "Thus he was not prepared to see a really responsible military adviser alongside himself," Manstein wrote. "He wanted to be another Napoléon, who had only tolerated men under him who would obediently carry out his will. Unfortunately he had neither Napoléon's military training nor his military genius."[3]

In addition to strategic blindness, Hitler was possessed, at least from the early 1920s, by two consuming demons. They wiped out what little logical, rational thinking he retained. One demon was his insane, relentless hatred of Jews. The other was an equally insane, relentless desire to destroy the Soviet Union. These paranoias led Hitler to attack the Soviet Union head-on in June 1941 and then to kill or starve millions of Slavs to provide *Lebensraum*, or space for German settlers. They also led to the *Einsatzgruppen* he sent in the wake of his armies to murder all the Jews they could find, and to the gas chambers at Auschwitz and other death camps where he killed millions more.

We can draw from these facts an inescapable truth: a successful commander must be able to take into consideration all the factors in a given situation, and then act on them.

Hitler's intellectual incapacities negated all the ideas of his senior commanders; he simply could not fathom what they were trying to achieve. Hitler was thus the exact opposite of the intelligent commander espoused by Sun Tzu who makes reasoned judgments based on all contingencies,

dangers, and opportunities. Instead, for Hitler the war came down to the very sort of contest he had experienced in the trenches.[4]

Hitler's crippling incompetence can be seen in the requirements he set for the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. Although Germany's forces were less than half the size of the Soviet forces, Hitler expected not only to destroy the Soviet army but also to seize a million square miles of western Russia in the summer and fall of 1941. This was an area as large as the United States east of the Mississippi River.

Hitler demanded that the German army undertake three simultaneous offensives in three totally different directions: one to Leningrad (St. Petersburg) in the north, one to Moscow in the center, and one to the Ukraine in the south. Achieving just one of these targets would have been an extremely demanding accomplishment. Achieving all three at once was impossible.

The offensives petered out in the snows of the Russian winter in front of Moscow in December 1941. Seven months of war left more than one million men killed, wounded, or captured, accounting for one-third of the entire German army in the Soviet Union.

The gains the Germans did achieve were due as much to the disastrous placement of the Red Army by Joseph Stalin as to the success of German arms. Stalin lined up his army along the frontier, with few reserves behind. When the German panzers punched holes in this front, they were able to swing around the largely immobile Russian infantry and create caldrons, trapping hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers, who were forced to surrender.

With the entry of the United States into the war after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a new strategic challenge faced Germany. Should Hitler continue to attack the Soviet Union, or should he switch to the defensive there and focus on preventing American and British forces from reaching the continent of Europe?[5]

The German navy chief, Erich Raeder, presented a strategy that answered both questions. He proposed two primary goals for 1942: Erwin Rommel, commander of the Africa Corps in Libya, should be given enough forces to capture Egypt, the Suez Canal, and the Middle East, and the German army in the east (*Ostheer*) should seize the Soviet oil fields in the

Caucasus and along the western shore of the Caspian Sea centering on the city of Baku. Germany had the power to achieve both of these goals, Raeder said. It did not have the power to do much more.

If Germany gained the oil fields, the Soviet Union's capacity to carry on modern warfare would be drastically reduced.[6] It had few other sources of oil. With limited fuel, Soviet tanks and trucks would be unable to sustain long offensives. If Germany controlled the Suez Canal, the Royal Navy would be forced to vacate the Mediterranean, and Germany could occupy all of North Africa. Germany could then turn its strength to building submarines and aircraft to interdict the flow of supplies and troops from America. Any effort by the Western Allies thereafter would be extremely difficult and highly problematical. Winston Churchill understood this quite well. In a message to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Churchill said that if Egypt and the Middle East were lost, continuation of the war "would be a hard, long, and bleak proposition."[7]

Rommel strongly endorsed Raeder's plan and told Hitler he could seize Egypt and the Middle East with just three more divisions—or about 45,000 men and 360 tanks. After receiving reinforcements early in 1942, the *Ostheer* numbered 2.4 million troops and thousands of tanks and new self-propelled guns.

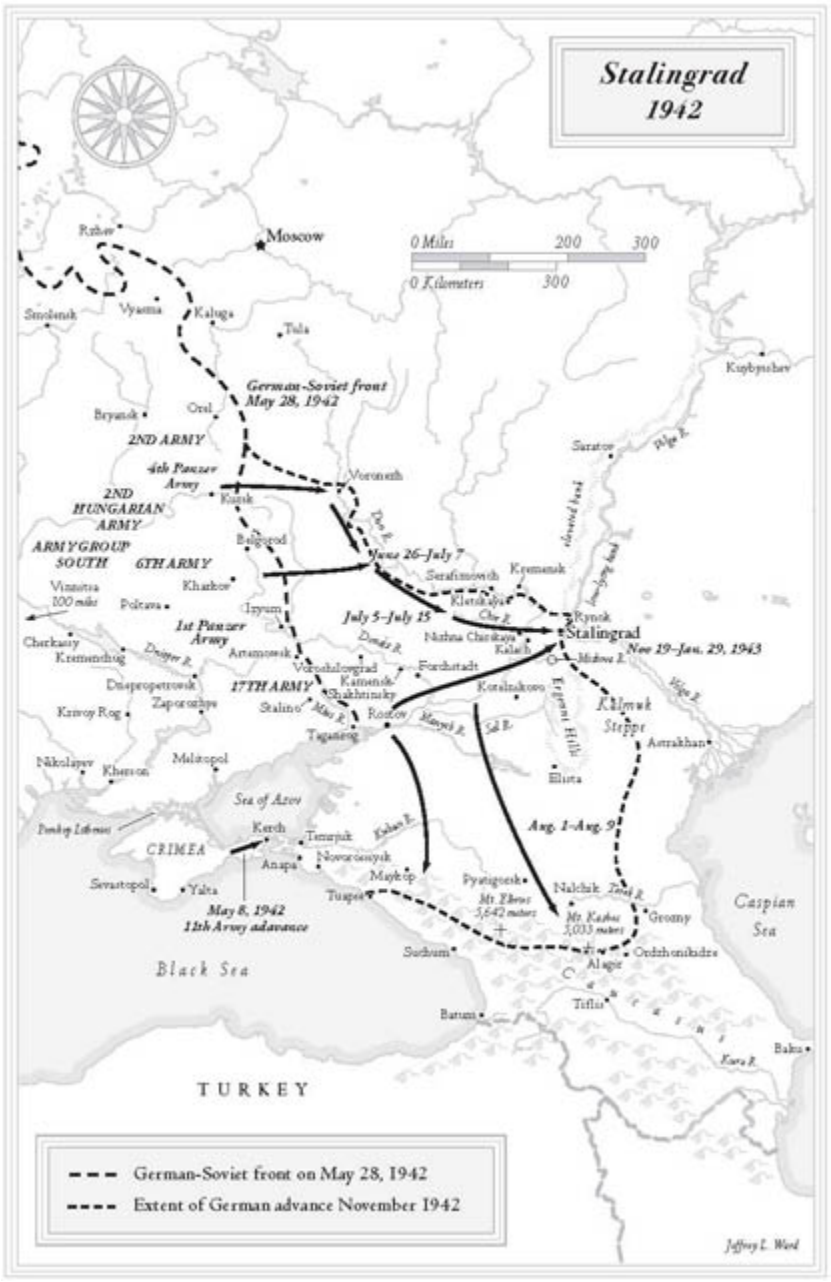
Raeder's proposals were by far the best option Germany possessed. But Hitler rejected sending more forces to Rommel. He accepted Raeder's proposal to seize the oil fields, but made it clear that he was not content merely to neutralize the Soviet Union, which capture of the oil fields would largely do. He wanted to *destroy* the Red Army. This was his primary goal. Capturing the oil fields was by comparison a low priority. He was unable to see how an indirect strike into the Caucasus with overwhelming forces would gain him nearly everything he truly needed in the east, preserving most of his remaining strength to counter the rising power of the United States.

Hitler could have achieved his purpose by an offensive with only a few mobile forces from Kursk eastward to Voronezh on the upper Don River. This would have drawn off most Soviet troops. Major German formations then could have moved southward and swept over the Caucasus. The Germans would have been moving on shorter interior lines. The

Soviets, moving on much longer exterior lines, would have found it extremely difficult to reinforce the south before German forces could seize it. A strike at Voronezh would have been a Sun Tzu *zheng*, a direct holding move. A strike at the Caucasus would have been a Sun Tzu *qi*, an indirect move that brings victory. But Hitler never considered this or any similar deceptive strategy.

Manstein, who dealt intensely with Hitler during this period, wrote that Hitler never grasped an essential element about warfare: that one can never be too strong at the crucial spot and that one may have to dispense with less vital fronts to achieve a decisive aim. Instead, Manstein wrote, Hitler "seized on almost any aim that caught his fancy, causing him to fritter away Germany's strength by taking on several objectives simultaneously."[8]

Instead of sending every possible soldier and tank against the oil fields, he sent most of his forces against the city of Stalingrad (now Volgograd) on the Volga River. This place had virtually no strategic importance, but Hitler insisted on seizing it. Stalingrad was irrelevant to gaining the oil fields. It faced the vast open steppes of Eurasia. Even if captured, it would gain him nothing but empty space.



The only reason Hitler gave for demanding its capture was to interdict oil tanker traffic up the Volga. But if the oil fields were captured, the traffic would cease in any case. Most observers believe that Hitler's primary motivation was that Stalin had renamed the old city of Tsari-tsyn in honor of himself in 1925. Attacking a city because of its name sounds like the reasoning of a lunatic. But Hitler insisted on capturing Leningrad in 1941—it too was not strategically important—because the Communist revolution

started there in 1917 and it was named after Vladimir (Nikolai) Lenin, leader of the revolution.

Hitler's original dispositions called for four armies to seize the Caucasus and for just one army to capture Stalingrad. But he quickly changed focus and turned three armies (the 2nd, 6th, and 4th Panzer) against Stalingrad and sent only two armies into the Caucasus. These armies (the 17th and the 1st Panzer) were too weak to overcome the frantic resistance of the Soviet armies, and they quickly stalled in the high passes of the Caucasus Mountains.[9]

All the seasoned commanders in the German army saw that this was madness. Franz Halder, the chief of staff, protested vehemently, but Hitler paid him no attention. Hitler insisted on believing that the Red Army was on the verge of collapse, and he ignored evidence of powerful Soviet formations to the east of the Volga and in the Caucasus. He screamed at Halder when the chief of staff informed him that the level of Soviet tank production was three times that of German production. "He would not believe what he did not want to believe,"[10] Halder wrote in his diary. Hitler transferred his headquarters to Vinnitsa in Ukraine and took over direct command of the southern part of the front.

Hitler's 1942 campaigns violated virtually all of Sun Tzu's rules of war. Instead of one objective, Hitler designated two. Instead of concentrating his forces, he fatally divided them. Instead of deception, he revealed his plans quite openly to the Soviets. Sun Tzu says that a skilled general must confuse the enemy while concealing his own dispositions and intent. But Hitler was plainly aiming at two completely different targets hundreds of miles apart.

Accordingly, the Soviets could ignore German formations elsewhere and mass all their reserves to contest these two offensives. This was clearly inconsistent with a Sun Tzu maxim. "Before he gives battle," Sun Tzu writes, "the superior general causes the enemy to disperse. When the enemy disperses and attempts to defend everywhere he is weak everywhere, and at the selected points many will be able to strike his few."[11] Hitler made no deceptive move to force the enemy to disperse. Likewise, he presented no zheng direct force to hold the Russians in place and no qi indirect force to

descend on the Russian flank or rear and to win by surprise. Everything was frontal, head-on, and obvious.

On June 28, 1942, Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army broke through Soviet defenses east of Kursk and captured Voronezh in a few days. While the 2nd Army moved into Voronezh, the 4th Panzer Army rolled down the dry steppe west of the Don River toward Kalach at the great bend of the Don, forty-five miles west of Stalingrad. It was followed by the huge 6th Army with twenty divisions under Friedrich Paulus. As the 4th Panzer turned south briefly, the 6th Army pressed toward Stalingrad. Paulus's mobile spearheads reached Kalach on July 28, 1942, but could not break through fierce Soviet resistance and cross the Don until August 23.

Meanwhile, Hoth's 4th Panzer Army had turned back north and was pressing through Elista in the Kalmuk Steppe toward Stalingrad. About fifty miles south of the city, Hoth's attack broke down against fierce resistance by two Soviet armies.

On July 28, Stalin issued a "*Ni shagu nazad!*" ("Not a step back!") order and sent the Stalingrad commander, Andrei I. Eremenko, eleven infantry divisions and nine Guards brigades of elite troops to reinforce his five depleted armies. Stalin set up supply bases in the steppe east of the Volga. Eremenko mobilized thousands of civilians in the city to assist the military, including boys aged thirteen to sixteen years. But he evacuated 200,000 people who were too old or too young to fight.

Stalingrad was not a fortress. It was a mixture of old buildings, industrial plants, railroad yards, and barrack-like apartments. It spread fifteen miles along the west bank of the Volga and two to four miles back from it. Good defensive positions were provided by the high western bank of the Volga, by numerous *balkas* (dry ravines or gullies with steep banks), and by railway embankments.

On August 24, Stuka attacks on Stalingrad caused massive damage, killing civilians, turning whole blocks into rubble, and setting fire to wooden structures. While the Stuka attacks were going on, the 16th Panzer Division swept aside modest Russian resistance west of the city and reached the Volga near Rynok, ten miles north of Stalingrad, at 6:30 p.m. on August

24. Hitler’s stated purpose had thus been accomplished: German artillery on the high bank of the Volga could stop tanker traffic on the river.

But Hitler insisted on the capture of the entire city. This required hand-to-hand, building-by-building combat of the closest and most intense kind. It was military insanity. All the senior officers in the campaign agreed that—when Stalingrad was not seized in the first rush—it should have been masked with defensive troops and ignored.

In extremely hot weather (it had not rained for two months), German forces were forced to mount individual assaults against the barricades that the Russians threw across nearly every street. The going was incredibly difficult. The Russians hid machine guns and mortars in shattered buildings and sealed off entire streets and neighborhoods with their fire. Every factory and solid building became a savagely defended fortress. German losses were heavy, and the advance slowed to a crawl. Supplies and ammunition were slow to arrive and insufficient.

As panzer leader Friedrich-Wilhelm von Mellenthin wrote, Hitler played directly into the hands of the Russians.[12] In this environment, the ill-trained but dogged Russian soldiers were a match for the most elite German forces. Fighting was close, sometimes face to face, and relied on brute force. All the German advantages of mobility, high troop skills, and precisely executed maneuvers were sacrificed. The battle degenerated into a stalemate.

One of Germany’s best formations, the massive, well-armed 6th Army, was immobilized in the chaotic rubble of the Stalingrad salient, where even tanks found it hard to move. But on either side of this salient the lines were being held for 150 miles along the Don to the west by decidedly second-rate, ill-equipped allied troops, the Romanian 3rd Army, the Italian 8th Army, and the Hungarian 2nd Army, and for an equal distance to the southeast by the small, ill-equipped four-division Romanian 4th Army guarding the Kalmuk Steppe.

It was obvious to all of the seasoned German generals that this situation could not be sustained. Erich von Manstein wrote, “A far-sighted leader would have realized from the start that to mass the whole of the German assault forces in and around Stalingrad without adequate flank

protection placed them in mortal danger of being enveloped as soon as the enemy broke through the adjacent fronts."[13]

The Russians were certain to be building forces on both sides of the salient in order to launch offensives to seal off Stalingrad and imprison the 6th Army.

Franz Halder, the chief of staff, assembled unimpeachable intelligence proving that this was taking place. When he insisted on telling Hitler, the führer dismissed him on September 24. The new chief of staff was Lieutenant General Kurt Zeitzler, a tank expert who saw that Hitler was not interested in the truth, and did nothing to challenge his insistence on keeping the 6th Army in its exposed position.

Hitler also sacked Wilhelm List, commander of the 17th and 1st Panzer Armies (Army Group A), because he had not captured all of the Caucasus. Instead of appointing a new commander, Hitler directed the group himself, in his spare time. Here was convincing evidence of Hitler's divorce from reality. From his headquarters at Vinnitsa, he issued orders for his troops to carry out operations deep in the mountains of the Caucasus that were impossible to execute. He never himself set foot in the the region, and knew nothing of the hopeless conditions his troops were facing there.

On November 19, 1942, in thick fog, N. F. Vatutin, commander of the Soviet Southwest Front, launched a massive tank-led offensive against the Romanian 3rd Army at Kletskaya and Kremensk on the Don eighty miles west of Stalingrad. The Romanians had no tanks of their own and no antitank guns that could penetrate the thick armor of the Soviet T-34 tanks. They lasted only briefly before the entire army disintegrated into headlong retreat. The next day, General Eremenko launched a similar T-34-led attack against the Romanian 4th Army in the Kalmuk Steppe. It too disappeared in chaos. The entire rear behind Stalingrad had been opened to the Soviet armor.

On November 22, two Soviet tank corps joined near Kalach and closed the pincers on the 6th Army. With this, 250,000 men were sealed within a pocket measuring thirty miles east and west and twenty-five miles north and south.

If the 6th Army had been allowed to break out, it almost certainly could have gotten away intact. But Hitler refused to allow the army to move. He ordered it to curl up like a hedgehog and defend itself in place. Hermann Göring, a crony of Hitler and chief of the Luftwaffe, promised grandiloquently that the air force would supply the army until a new battle group could be formed to break the caldron. Senior Luftwaffe officers said it couldn't be done, but Hitler ignored their warnings.

As Soviet troops formed a double ring around Stalingrad, one to hold the 6th Army, the other to forestall rescue efforts, Soviet gunners posted 395 antiaircraft guns along the air corridor the Luftwaffe had to fly, while 490 fighter aircraft assembled to shoot down Luftwaffe transports.

The daily needs of the 6th Army totaled 700 tons, but Colonel Fritz Morzik, Luftwaffe air transport chief, said that at best his transports could fly in 350 tons a day. This proved that air supply was impossible, but Hitler refused to look at the facts. The Luftwaffe could not even deliver one-half of the 6th Army's needs. Though air officers made extreme efforts, they set down just 269 tons from November 25 to 29, and only 1,267 tons from November 30 to December 11. Ammunition supplies dropped, fuel became scarce, and the men began to starve.

Meanwhile another, even more dangerous, enveloping movement was threatening. The blunders of Adolf Hitler had opened a vast opportunity for the Soviets to win the war in a few months, if not weeks. After the Soviets overran the Romanian 3rd Army at Kletskaya and Kremensk, Manstein withdrew the main German defensive line to the Chir River, some 50 miles south of the Don and to the west of Stalingrad. Defending the upper Chir was the six-division Italian 8th Army. The Italian army was just 200 miles northeast of Rostov on the lower Don next to the Sea of Azov. If a Soviet army could crash through the Italians and drive to Rostov, it could cut off and destroy not only the beleaguered 6th Army at Stalingrad but also both German armies in the Caucasus and the German forces along the Chir. In other words, if the Russians could reach Rostov, they could destroy *all* the German forces and their allies on the southern front. If these forces were lost, Germany could no longer defend itself. The war would be lost. The senior commanders in the German army saw this peril clearly, but Hitler did not.

German intelligence services were providing irrefutable evidence that the Soviets were, in fact, massing for just such a war-winning move. Army group Voronezh Front under F. I. Golikov was gathering on the upper Chir opposite the pitifully inadequate Italian 8th Army.

Despite the danger, Manstein saw that the immediate problem was to extricate the 6th Army from its trap at Stalingrad. Hitler had already handed him the task of relieving the army. If this immense force could be extricated, it could blunt a strike toward Rostov.

Manstein found a narrow avenue along which a relieving force could advance—from Kotelnikovo southwest of Stalingrad. He had immense difficulties assembling a strike force but finally acquired just one panzer corps, the 57th, to break a hole and advance to Stalingrad. He launched the attack on December 12. It caught the Russians by surprise and made good progress, although the Soviets brought up troops and counterattacked time after time.

Meanwhile, the Soviets unleashed their offensive toward Rostov on December 16. The Soviet 1st Guards Army overran the Italians with ease. The Italian army disintegrated, and a sixty-mile-wide rupture opened in the front, through which Soviet tanks poured, aiming straight for Rostov. Manstein ordered General Karl-Adolf Hollidt, commanding along the Chir, to pull back to guard the crossings over the Donetz River at Forchstadt and Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, the only barrier now in front of Rostov.

Despite the danger, Manstein held steadfastly to his advance on Stalingrad. He called on the army high command (OKH) to order the 6th Army to break out toward the advancing 57th Panzer Corps. If both forces exerted their utmost strength, they could crack through the defensive shield and meet.

But Hitler refused to sanction a breakout. It was beyond belief, but he ruled that the 57th Panzer Corps was to continue to attack, while the 6th Army was to remain in place. Manstein slowly realized that Hitler intended to hold onto Stalingrad and supply it by a land corridor. This was a manifest impossibility, but Hitler was totally unable to understand that the 6th Army could survive *only* if it withdrew from Stalingrad. Manstein could not believe that Hitler was so stupid, and hoped he could get him to change his mind.

The critical moment came on December 19. The 57th Corps reached the narrow Miskova River, just thirty miles from the siege front. Manstein sent an urgent message to 6th Army commander Paulus and to Hitler: the 6th Army must disengage and drive southwest to join the 57th Panzer Corps.

Hitler took hours to reply. He finally said the 6th Army could break out, but it still had to hold existing fronts north, east, and west of the city. This was patently impossible. Hitler's refusal to allow the 6th Army to extricate itself was a death sentence. For seven days the 57th Panzer Corps had run every conceivable risk to open a door and keep it open. For seven more days Manstein held the corps at the Miskova River, trying desperately to get Hitler to change his mind. But he refused. Manstein could leave the corps exposed no longer. On December 27, he pulled his severely weakened force back toward Kotelnikovo. The attempt to relieve Stalingrad had failed—not because the troops had failed, but because Hitler could not see reality.

The German 6th Army now proceeded to die. Food supplies dwindled to virtually nothing. Russian attacks drove the Germans out of most of their shelters. The survivors huddled in the ruins close to the Volga. On February 2, 1943, the last resistance ceased. The Luftwaffe had evacuated about 25,000 wounded and specialists, but about 160,000 men died and 91,000 were captured. Most of the prisoners soon succumbed to exposure and typhus. Only 6,000 saw their homeland again, after twelve years of captivity.

Erich von Manstein turned his attention to saving the rest of the German army in the south. The Soviet offensive aimed at Rostov was proceeding at full force. Dogged defense in front of the Donetz River temporarily held up the Russian advance.

At this lowest point of German fortune, Manstein saw an opportunity to turn devastating defeat into spectacular victory. His concept was pure Sun Tzu: deception and striking a massive blow from a wholly unexpected direction.

Manstein recognized that all of the gains in the south in 1942 were going to be lost. Army Group A could not remain in the Caucasus. Once the

Russians seized Rostov, they would be cut off. The few German forces remaining west of Stalingrad would have to retreat.

Accordingly, he proposed to Hitler that—while Hollidt temporarily held the Russians at bay in front of the Donetz—all the German forces on the southern front be withdrawn in stages to the lower Dnieper River, 220 miles west of Rostov. Manstein was certain that the Russians would perceive a massive withdrawal as a collapse of German will. They would believe that they could destroy the German army by a swift offensive aimed at cutting the Germans off from the essential Dnieper crossings of Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye, where any evacuations must take place and where all supplies came through. Manstein was certain that the Russians would make every effort to sweep around the Germans and get to the crossings first. This would create a vastly extended, extremely fluid Russian front stretching across the lower Ukraine.

Manstein proposed that, in the meantime, a powerful German force be concentrated near Kharkov, 250 miles northwest of Rostov and 125 miles northeast of Dnepropetrovsk. When the Soviets extended themselves westward, the German forces around Kharkov would drive into their northern flank. This movement, Manstein told Hitler, would "convert a large-scale withdrawal into an envelopment operation" that would push the Russians against the Sea of Azov to the south and destroy them.[14]

It was a brilliant concept, as brilliant and as deceptive as Manstein's strategy to strike through the Ardennes against the Western Allies. It would throw the Russians on the defensive and transform the strategic picture in the south.

But Hitler refused. He didn't want to give up his summer conquests, transient as they were. Manstein concluded that the dictator "actually recoiled from risks in the military field."

"Obstinate defense of every foot of ground gradually became the be all and end all of Hitler's leadership," Manstein wrote. "Hitler thought the arcanum of success lay in clinging at all costs to what he already possessed."[15]

It was only because of Manstein that all the German armies, except the 6th, got away. Manstein ignored Hitler's orders for the troops to remain in place, finding one subterfuge after another to justify his actions. He

pulled back the German armies in a series of masterful retreats. The Germans abandoned Kursk in the center and withdrew beyond Kharkov, 430 miles west of Stalingrad. Manstein held Rostov long enough for the Germans to withdraw from the Caucasus. Even so, Hitler insisted on keeping the 17th Army in the Kuban region of the northwest corner of the Caucasus, where it served no purpose but later was able to evacuate across the Strait of Kerch to the Crimea. Manstein formed a new line along the Mius River, forty miles west of Rostov, and stopped the Russian advance.

Manstein achieved the last success of German arms on the eastern front. On March 14, 1943, he enveloped overextended Soviet forces at Kharkov and recaptured the city.

Admiral Raeder and Generals Halder and Manstein had conceived their own strategies and policies that mirrored axioms of Sun Tzu. They had urged these measures on Hitler. But he had ignored them all, and thereby had brought about the most devastating defeat suffered by German arms in the war. With the loss of a quarter of a million of his best troops at Stalingrad and his refusal afterward to carry out a strategic withdrawal and counteroffensive, Hitler lost the initiative. He now was condemned to a deadly defensive war on all fronts. This was a war that Germany was increasingly incapable of pursuing because its arms production was nowhere close to that of the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. Stalingrad is a textbook case of the contrast between what a campaign following the axioms of Sun Tzu could have achieved, and what actually happened when these axioms are disregarded. In the direction pointed out by Admiral Raeder lay at least a stalemate and possibly a negotiated peace. In the direction followed by Hitler lay inevitable defeat.

NINE

The Liberation of France, 1944

Both the Allies and the Germans violated Sun Tzu principles in the campaign to liberate Europe that began with the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. These failures led to disastrous losses and consequences on both sides.[1]

The first and most decisive German blunder was to not learn about and accommodate to the capabilities of the enemy, in this case the strength of Allied air power—a breach of one of Sun Tzu's maxims.[2] Accordingly, the Germans held in the interior the ten panzer or panzer-

grenadier "fast divisions" (*Schnelldivisionen*)[3] that Adolf Hitler had allocated to defend the West, intending to launch them at the beaches once the Allies had landed. But Allied air power kept these divisions from reaching the beachheads while the Allies were still weak and vulnerable and could have been overrun. This failure permitted the Allies to consolidate their hold on Normandy and ultimately achieve victory.

The Allied blunders also began prior to the invasion with their failure to ascertain in advance the nature of enemy terrain and to adapt to it—a breach of another of Sun Tzu's rules.[4] The Allies did not anticipate the barriers created by the hedgerow-bordered fields of the Norman bocage country. These enclosed fields became individual battlefields that stymied the Allied advance for seven weeks and cost 200,000 casualties.

When the Americans finally broke through the hedgerow country on July 25, 1944, Hitler made the ruinous decision to hold his armies in Normandy when he should have evacuated them at once.[5]

The Allied senior commanders then rejected the proposal of General George S. Patton Jr. to encircle the Germans and force their surrender. Instead, they tried to seal off the German escape route. This was poorly executed. Though the Germans suffered much from Allied air power, the vast bulk of them got away, allowing Hitler to pursue the war for eight more deadly months. In these decisions, the senior Allied generals violated a fundamental tenet of Sun Tzu. They did not investigate objectively Patton's proposal, and they did not follow through in preventing the German escape. An intelligent commander, Sun Tzu says, *creates* opportunities for victory, taking advantage of events as they occur. He does not depend on fortuitous victory. He never relies on chance.[6]

The decision as to where the panzer and panzer-grenadier divisions were to be stationed pitted against each other the two greatest armored commanders in history, Heinz Guderian, father of the panzers, and Erwin Rommel, the "Desert Fox" who achieved renown as commander of the Africa Corps in Libya and Egypt in 1941–1942.

Guderian, along with General Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg, chief of panzer training in the West, proposed that the ten fast divisions be stationed north and south of Paris. This would be far enough inland from the Atlantic coast that they could be switched to the main invasion front once it had been identified. Both officers recognized the superiority of Allied air power, but they believed the problem could be overcome by moving at night. They received approval from Gerd von Rundstedt, commander in chief West.

Guderian thought the Allies should be allowed to land where they chose and to make a penetration. Then the Allies could be thrown back into the sea by a counteroffensive on a giant scale. This was how the Germans had successfully countered Soviet offensives in Russia. Neither he nor Geyr had any idea how Anglo-American command of the air could restrict panzer movement.

Rommel did. He knew from his experiences with superior air power in North Africa that Allied aircraft could shatter vehicles, break bridges, and

tear up roads leading to the front, thereby slowing motorized movements day or night. Rommel, who, as commander of Army Group B, was in charge of defending the Atlantic coast, insisted on stationing panzer divisions very close to the beaches. He told Guderian that the day of mobile warfare for Germany had passed because of superior Allied air power and because Germany had not kept pace with the Western Allies in the production of tanks and armored vehicles.

In Rommel's eyes, the Germans had to determine in advance where the Allies were going to invade. If German armor could not move, it had to be close to the invasion site. Rommel decided that the Allies would land at the Pas-de-Calais opposite Dover. He ruled out other landing sites because the Pas-de-Calais gave access to a port or ports capable of handling large ships, and because the Allies could provide greater air cover there than anywhere else. "If the enemy once gets his foot in, he'll put every antitank gun and tank he can into the bridgehead and let us beat our heads against it," he told Fritz Bayerlein, commander of the Panzer Lehr Division.[7]

To prevent this from happening, Rommel insisted, the Germans had to fight and win the battle right on the beaches. Reserves could not be posted any great distance inland. They had to be right behind the shore so they could come up quickly irrespective of Allied air power. Accordingly, Rommel began constructing a fortified mined zone from the Pas-de-Calais coast to points five or six miles inland. Rommel built some defensive positions along the Normandy coast, but not many.

Rommel was wrong about the landing site, of course. He was not aware of a brilliant British invention—two artificial harbors (Mulberries) that could serve as temporary ports. The Allies did not have to capture a port to invade the Continent. They could land on the beaches of Normandy, the least likely place that was still under the Allied air umbrella.

Guderian also was wrong about Allied air power. In the winter of 1944, the Luftwaffe was virtually driven from the skies by the American P-51 Mustang fighter. With range-extending detachable wing fuel tanks, it was escorting B-17 bombers in daylight raids deep into Germany. The Luftwaffe was compelled to challenge the P-51s, but their best fighter, the Focke-Wulf 190, was inferior. The Germans lost large numbers of fighters combating the raids. By the spring of 1944, virtually no fighters remained.[8]

The situation called for an intense application of a Sun Tzu axiom. “What is of supreme importance in war,” he writes, “is to attack the enemy’s strategy.”[9] Perhaps because of the heated dispute over where the panzers were to be stationed, the German leaders failed to analyze Allied strategy. If they had done so, they could have figured easily the few places where an invasion would have to come.

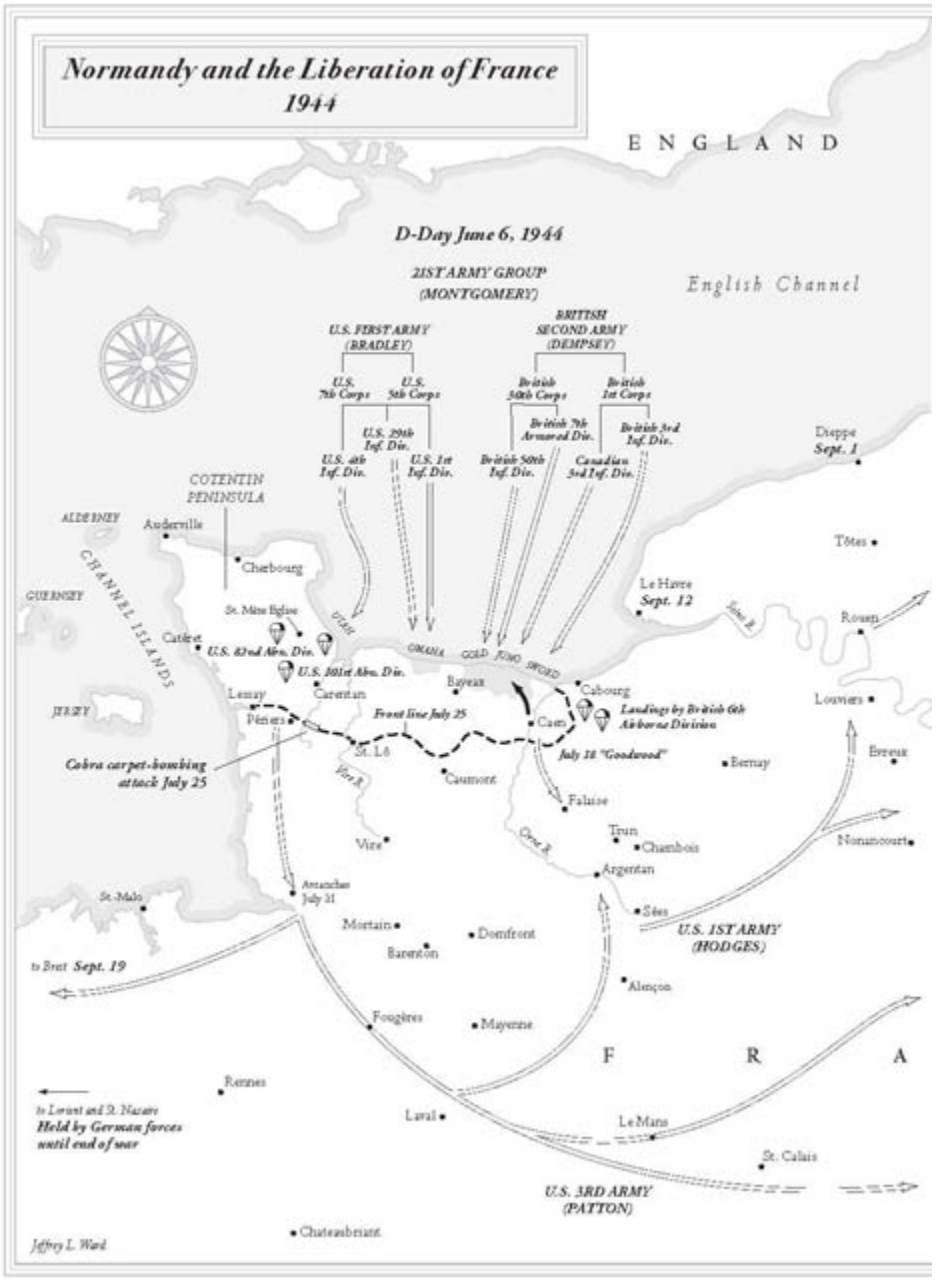
Allied strategy was based on superior air power. The Allies had demonstrated in the Mediterranean in 1943 that they would land only on beaches that their fighter aircraft could cover. Since the best British fighter, the Spitfire, had an operating range of a little over 400 miles, all landing sites in Sicily and Italy were within 200 miles of Allied airfields. Although later models of the Spitfire, along with other British and American fighters and fighter-bombers, had somewhat longer ranges, only three locations were within Allied fighter coverage: the Pas-de-Calais, the Normandy beaches, and the Cotentin Peninsula of Normandy.[10] Because the Germans were well aware of the Allied fixation on air cover, they could have used logic to figure out the potential landing sites. And if they had stationed three or four panzer divisions directly behind each of these three sites, they could have moved quickly to drive the Allies off whichever beach they landed on.

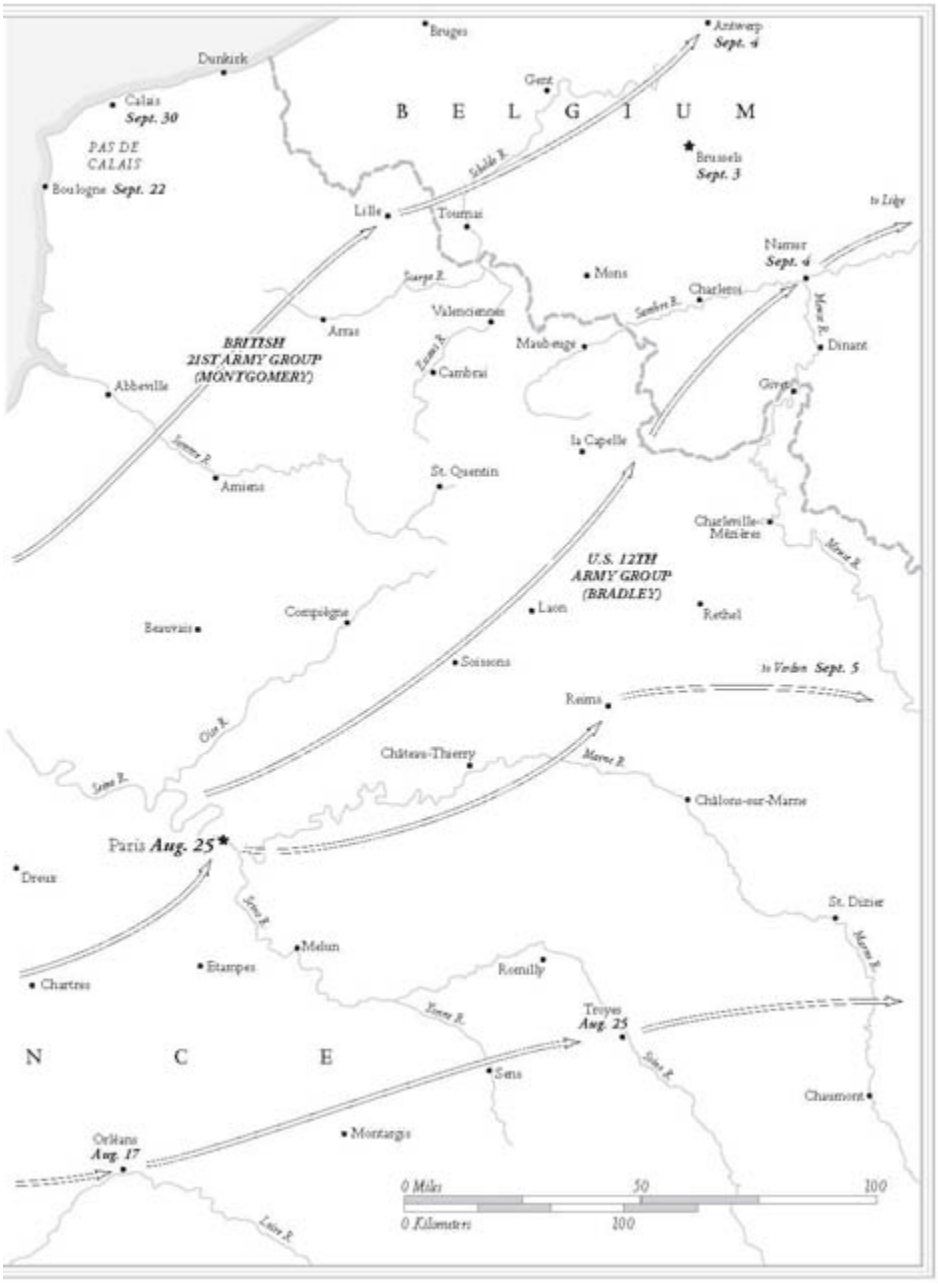
Such a compromise would have solved the problem of where to post the panzers. It would have answered Rommel’s insistence on having tanks right at the invasion beaches, and it would have given Guderian mobile reserves for unexpected contingencies. It was this need that motivated him to want the tanks posted safely inland.

But this did not happen. Rommel persisted in believing, until shortly before the landing, that the Pas-de-Calais was the only possible site. Since Guderian, Geyr, and Rundstedt believed otherwise, the final decision fell to Adolf Hitler. The führer had already shown in countless cases that he was unable to make up his mind. As Erich von Manstein had observed closely, he seized on anything that struck his fancy or aroused his fears, and made wholly illogical decisions.[11] Seeing dangers at every turn, he spread the ten panzer and panzer-grenadier divisions from northern Belgium to the south of France. In the final allocation, Hitler stationed six fast divisions north of the Loire River and four south of the river, three of them near the Spanish

frontier or close to Marseille along the Mediterranean coast. Spreading of the panzers was a flagrant violation of Sun Tzu doctrine to concentrate one's forces. As a consequence, German armored divisions found it impossible to get to Normandy in time to make any difference. Just a single panzer division was near the Normandy beaches, and the commander was so indecisive that he frittered away his chances to snuff out the landings.[12]

The blunder in failing to figure out the three places where the Allies could land resulted in calamity for the Germans. Because of intensive Allied air interdiction, practically every unit ordered to the battlefront suffered heavy damage. Casualties ran to 2,500 to 3,000 men a day. Replacements were few, and the immense losses in tanks and self-propelled guns were never made up. The railway system serving Normandy vanished under Allied bombs. Fighter-bombers smashed anything moving on the roads during the day. The supply system was so damaged that only the barest essentials reached the front.


Normandy and the Liberation of France
1944
ENGLAND
D-Day June 6, 1944
21ST ARMY GROUP
(MONTGOMERY)
English Channel
U.S. FIRST ARMY
(BRADLEY)
BRITISH
SECOND ARMY
(DEMPSEY)
U.S. 7th Corps
U.S. 5th Corps
British 30th Corps
British 1st Corps
U.S. 29th Inf. Div.
British 7th Armored Div.
British 3rd Inf. Div.
U.S. 4th Inf. Div.
U.S. 1st Inf. Div.
British 50th Inf. Div.
Canadian 3rd Inf. Div.
Dieppe
Sept. 1
COTENTIN
PENINSULA
ALDERNEY
Auderville
Cherbourg
Tôtes
Le Havre
Sept. 12
GUERNSEY
CHANNEL ISLANDS
St. Mère Eglise
Rouen
Seine R.
Catteret
U.S. 82nd Abn. Div.
U.S. 101st Abn. Div.
UTAH
OMAHA
GOLD
JUNO
SWORD
Lessay
Carentan
Bayeux
Cabourg
Louviers
JERSEY
Périers
Front line July 25
Caen
Landings by British 6th Airborne Division
July 18 "Goodwood"
Cobra carpet-bombing attack July 25
St. Lô
Bernay
Evreux
Vire R.
Caumont
Falaise
Vire
Thun
Chambois
Orne R.
Argentan
Nonancourt
Avranches
July 31
St.-Malo
Sées
Mortain
Domfront
U.S. 1ST ARMY
(HODGES)
Barenton
to Brest Sept. 19
Alençon
Fougères
Mayenne
F
R
A
Rennes
to Lorient and St. Nazaire
Held by German forces
until end of war
Laval
Le Mans
St. Calais
U.S. 3RD ARMY
(PATTON)
Chateaubriant
Jeffrey L. Ward



Rommel and Rundstedt went to Hitler's retreat at Berchtesgaden in Bavaria on June 29 to talk with the führer. They told Hitler the situation was impossible. How, Rommel asked, did Hitler imagine the war could still be won? The question brought on a chaotic argument from Hitler. Rundstedt and Rommel expected to be ousted from their jobs. When Rundstedt got back to Paris on July 1, he received an order from Hitler that "present positions are to be held." He called Hitler's headquarters and told a staff

officer he couldn't fulfill this demand. "What shall we do?" the officer asked. Rundstedt replied, "Make peace, you fools."[13]

On the next day a messenger from Hitler handed Rundstedt a handwritten note relieving him of command because of "age and poor health." His successor was Günther von Kluge, who quickly took the same gloomy approach as Rundstedt.

Rommel, to his surprise, remained at his post. About this time Rommel and his chief of staff, Hans Speidel, concluded that the Germans should commence peace talks with the Western Allies. But before any action could be taken, Rommel was severely wounded by a low-flying American aircraft near Livarot on July 17.

Three days later, on July 20, 1944, a bomb exploded under a table at Hitler's headquarters in Rastenburg, East Prussia, where Hitler was meeting. Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, a leader of the secret opposition to Hitler, had placed it there. But the führer survived and commenced a wave of terror against anyone suspected of a role in the plot. This led to numerous executions. On October 14, 1944, a deputation from Berlin visited Rommel, who was recovering from his wounds at his home near Ulm. The group gave him a choice. He could be tried by a People's Court, which would have meant execution, or he could take poison and receive a state funeral—and his wife and son would not be persecuted. Rommel chose poison.[14]

Meanwhile the Allies were having great difficulties with the *bocage*—the hedgerow country of Normandy. The hedgerows were a total surprise. None of the planners had thought to find out what the land was like behind the beaches, despite the fact that Normandy had been an extremely popular British travel destination before the war. Virtually the entire American sector, from the coast of the Cotentin Peninsula to the north-south line from Caumont to Bayeux, was *bocage* country. In the British sector to the east, the land was part *bocage* and part rolling countryside.

To protect their crops and their animals against sea winds and to mark boundaries, for centuries Norman farmers had closed their land into fields of only a few acres by raising embankments three or four feet high around each field. Dense shrubbery, brambles, hawthorn, and small trees grew on

these banks, forming solid barriers that held in animals. Each field had a gate to admit animals and equipment. Dirt tracks or sunken lanes ("holloways"), largely overgrown and obscured from observation, ran between these hedgerows, permitting troops and weapons to move free from observation from the air or on the ground. The effect was to divide the terrain into thousands of walled enclosures.

The bocage was ideal country for defensive warfare. The Germans could hide in the hedgerows. As Allied soldiers or tanks advanced across the small fields, the Germans could launch *Panzerfäuste*, or bazooka rockets, at the vehicles and shatter the infantry with automatic weapons fire. The Germans organized each field as a defensive stronghold. Once they had stopped an attack, they brought down preregistered mortar rounds on the field. Mortars caused three-quarters of the American casualties in Normandy. Camouflaged Tiger tanks, assault guns, and 88-millimeter antiaircraft guns could knock out any Allied tank up to 2,000 yards distant that ventured onto the main roads or lanes or into the holloways.

The Allied advance ground to a halt. The war was in danger of degenerating into a stalemate. Now the utter failure of Allied planners to anticipate this debilitating terrain feature was being paid for with the blood of Allied soldiers.

We have seen throughout history abundant examples of the incapacity of some commanders to anticipate the environments in which they require their soldiers to fight, and the deadly consequences this can bring. General John Burgoyne's disregard of the entrapping territory of upper New York in 1777, for example, was the fundamental reason for his defeat and surrender —and Britain's loss of the American colonies. Another example is Robert E. Lee's failure to determine that the course of the Potomac River at Antietam boxed the Confederate army into a corner in which its only hope was somehow to survive. It was this disaster that made possible the Emancipation Proclamation and the South's ultimate defeat.

The decisive importance of terrain is why Sun Tzu emphasizes that it is imperative for commanders to know "mountains and forests, gorges and defiles, the shape of marshes and wetlands."[15]

The *bocage* was no secret. Normandy and England had been intimately connected well before the Norman conquest of 1066, and this

connection continued in the following centuries. Many thousands of contemporary Britons knew the landscape well. It was therefore inexcusable for the officers in charge of Operation Overlord, the plan to invade Europe, to anticipate the *bocage*.

Vast tracts of southern England were covered with hedgerow-enclosed fields very similar to the *bocage*. If the Overlord planners had recognized what they were dealing with, they could easily have experimented with ways to crack the hedgerows without heavy losses. They could have come up in advance with the solution that individual soldiers discovered on their own in Normandy. The soldiers found that by welding bulldozer-like blades to the front of the standard Allied tank, the Sherman M4A3, it could break through the hedgerows without exposing its thin and vulnerable underside to enemy fire. It was this Achilles' heel that German soldiers exploited to destroy most of the Shermans as they crashed into Norman fields.

Once the soldiers hit on an ad hoc answer, they undertook a prodigious program and equipped 60 percent of the Shermans with the blades by July 25.

But this resolution was still in the works in the weeks after the landings on June 6, and American commanders were frantically searching for some way out of the impasse. Omar Bradley, commander of the U.S. 1st Army, decided to take advantage of Allied command of the air to blow apart a three-mile section of the German line a few miles west of the town of Saint-Lô. If he could break a wide hole in the German line, he hoped the 7th Corps under J. Lawton Collins could rush into the German rear and shatter the German defensive position. The operation, called Cobra, took place on July 25 and involved 1,500 heavy bombers, 380 medium bombers, and 550 fighter-bombers.

Panzer Lehr Division received the brunt of the Cobra attack. The commander, Fritz Bayerlein, reported that all German positions were shattered and that the landscape resembled the moon. One-third of the German combat effectives were killed or wounded, and only a dozen tanks remained in operation. German opposition melted away.

By the end of July 26, American armor had penetrated ten miles, and the next day it went farther. The entire western portion of the German front collapsed. On Collins's right, or west, Troy Middleton's 8th Corps broke

through and turned the corner between Normandy and Brittany at Avranches. The *bocage* had been bypassed.

Once the Allies broke out of Normandy, Operation Overlord called for the Allies to capture Brittany and open the Breton ports to supply the Allied armies. Omar Bradley was charged with this task, and on August 1, George Patton's 3rd Army was formally activated to carry it out.

At this moment, Adolf Hitler handed the Allies gratis a means of ending the war well before the end of 1944. He committed another of the catastrophic mistakes that had marked his conduct of the war. He demanded that his panzers drive westward to recapture Avranches. Hitler's aim was to isolate and destroy all American forces that had advanced into Brittany and south of Avranches.

Hitler's decision was a strategic blunder of massive proportions. The American breakthrough had placed all of the German armies in Normandy in grave jeopardy, because Americans were now south of the German armies and could press eastward and encircle them on all sides. The correct military response was for the Germans to retreat at once, first to the Seine River, then to other river and terrain barriers eastward toward the German frontier, thereby preserving the German armies and their weapons to fight another day.

But Hitler was unwilling to give up any territory. He also was deeply distracted because of the attempt on his life on July 20, which showed a willingness of many Germans to end the war as soon as possible.

Patton—by far the most imaginative and capable commander on the Allied side—recognized Hitler's error at once. He saw that a gigantic, swift victory could be achieved. He and other American generals on the spot were sure that they could stop the German panzer attack toward Avranches. Patton saw that the attack would actually imperil the Germans further. It would send many of their forces far westward, making it that much more difficult to extract their armies from the trap that was forming around them in Normandy.

Patton pointed out to Bradley that, since the Americans were now well south of the German armies, the way was open for a massive strike eastward against almost no opposition through the "gap" between Orléans and Paris. American forces could seize Paris swiftly and then drive down the right, or northern, bank of the Seine River to the English Channel and

cut off all German forces in Normandy. These armies would be forced to surrender. There would then be few German forces remaining to contest a quick strike for the Rhine River. Once across the river, flying columns could overrun Germany in days. The war could be ended quickly and with few additional casualties.

Patton's plan would permit the Allies to scrap the slow, careful advance that the Overlord planners had expected to conduct against a doggedly defending, formidable German army. Such a move would be a Sun Tzu *qi*, or indirect, strike that would achieve victory, while the remaining Allied troops in Normandy kept the Germans in place with a Sun Tzu *zheng*, or holding, action.

Here was the decisive moment in the campaign to liberate France and end the war. Patton had seen a chance to exploit Hitler's fatal insistence on holding every inch of ground. Patton wanted to use this flaw to isolate and force the surrender of all the German armies in Normandy. But the decision rested not with Patton, but with his superiors: American General Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme commander; British General Bernard Law Montgomery, Allied ground forces commander; and Bradley, who was extremely cautious, was not given to making bold decisions, and had decided on Cobra only as a desperate measure to break out of the trap of the *bocage*.

All three senior commanders were lacking in strategic sense and imagination. Eisenhower had no battle experience and no grand view of how to win the war. But he was willing to accept responsibility, he was fair and patient, and he had a big grin and an easy, familiar way of talking. People liked Ike. Montgomery had led the British 8th Army to victory in Egypt and Libya. The son of a perfectionist mother and an ineffectual father, Montgomery grew up introverted, tactless, and arrogant. He was highly critical of others, and he refused to compromise, in direct contrast to Eisenhower. Bradley was a self-effacing, homespun Missourian who was often filled with doubt. He had been catapulted over Patton when Patton was nearly sent home in disgrace after slapping two enlisted men he thought were malingering in hospitals in Sicily in 1943. Eisenhower had finally decided to keep Patton, but resolved to give him no higher command than that of an army.

Patton was a polar opposite of Bradley. He was eccentric, erratic, vain, deeply emotional, and a genuine military romantic. Born in California, he was the scion of a prominent Virginia family. His grandfather was a Confederate colonel, and John Singleton Mosby, the famous Confederate partisan leader in Virginia who had become a lawyer in California, frequently visited in the Patton home. Patton grew up hearing stories of Mosby's adventures, and he sought to become a hero in his own right.

But Patton's situation was analogous to Stonewall Jackson's. Jackson understood almost from the outset how to win the war for the South, but, as a subordinate commander, he was unable to carry his strategy into practice. Patton likewise saw a way to victory in the summer of 1944, but, as a subordinate, he depended on superior commanders to accept his proposals.

Bradley, who had now moved up to command the 12th Army Group, took very seriously the Overlord plan to seize the ports of Brittany. But Patton and some subordinate armored generals were clamoring to abandon this methodical plan as unnecessary, and to use the limited number of available troops to launch a full-blown offensive eastward.

Everything had been transformed by the German collapse on the western flank. The Allies were already supplying thirty divisions through the captured Norman port of Cherbourg and the single Mulberry port off Normandy that had survived a channel storm. These ports could supply flying columns under Patton that could race to Paris, and then turn down the north bank of the Seine to the sea.

The war then could be finished by forming a relatively small mobile force that could rush to the German frontier on a very narrow front, cross the Rhine River, and penetrate into the heart of Germany in a series of rapier thrusts. There would be few German forces to stop such a concentrated push. In weeks it could drive a stake in the heart of German resistance and end the war.

As Bradley was contemplating Patton's proposal, the German panzers reached just to the west of Mortain, about twenty miles east of Avranches, but were halted by strong American forces. Since Hitler still refused to allow withdrawal, the German troops were lodged in a deep salient running from Mortain on the west to the vicinity of

Falaise, forty-five miles to the northeast. Falaise was twenty miles south of Caen, the British anchor on the eastern end of the Normandy

bridgehead.

However glittering the possibilities of Patton's plan, Bradley could not bring himself to undertake it. Bradley was too conventional a soldier. The plan had blossomed forth in Patton's mind when Hitler attempted to nullify the Cobra breakout with the hopeless strike for Avranches. Neither Hitler's atrocious strategy nor the unexpected bonanza of the German collapse had been anticipated by the meticulous Overlord planners. To authorize it, Bradley would have to exhibit boldness, innovation, and speed. This was not Bradley's way.

Bradley got no help from Montgomery, who had even less imagination than Bradley, and who advised him to continue the original Overlord plan to seize Brittany. Eisenhower stayed aloof from the whole affair.

Bradley thus chose the orthodox option: to devote most of his strength to capturing Brittany. Patton, still on probation from the Sicilian slappings, felt too insecure to raise a formal objection. Montgomery and Bradley failed to recognize the brilliance and imagination exhibited in Patton's idea. They lost a great opportunity to end the war in weeks.

The Breton effort at once became a side show, and it was costly, time-consuming, and utterly futile. It took 20,000 American troops two weeks to seize Saint-Malo on the north coast of Brittany, which was destroyed and made unusable in the process. It took more than three divisions suffering almost 10,000 casualties in a month-long operation to capture Brest, which also was ruined in the fighting. Lorient and Saint-Nazaire remained under German control, ringed about by American troops, to the end of the war. Bradley sent far too many soldiers into Brittany, a useless expenditure of resources, and they fought a bitter campaign for ports that were never used, a tragic waste of effort and of men.

Patton did not say so publicly, but he echoed John Shirley Wood, commander of the U.S. 4th Armored Division. Wood complained that the senior commanders were "winning the war in the wrong way,"[16] because they were moving far too slowly, were undertaking operations of little benefit, and were suffering far too many unnecessary casualties.

With the relatively few American troops that he had not committed to Brittany, Bradley opted for a much less ambitious plan than Patton had

proposed. After the failure of Hitler's strike toward Avranches, the Germans were in a perilous situation. To the north were Montgomery's two armies (British 2nd and Canadian 1st) and the U.S. 1st Army, now under Courtney Hodges. To the south was Wade Haislip's 15th Corps, the single element of Patton's 3rd Army not committed to Brittany.

Bradley's plan was for Haislip's corps to reach Alençon, seventy-five miles east of Avranches, and then turn *north* and drive through Argentan to join the Canadians and Poles who were now pressing south from Caen to seize Falaise. If successful, this maneuver would trap whatever German forces were between Mortain and Falaise-Argentan.

Bradley's plan was likely to achieve big dividends only if it was conducted with great force, speed, and persistence. Patton was not impressed because the plan required a junction with Montgomery, who was notoriously slow. As Patton expected, Montgomery did not push the Canadians and the Poles to move on Falaise with any speed, and he also would not allow Patton's Americans to advance on their own to Falaise, because it was in the British sector.

Montgomery, obsessed with keeping a "tidy battlefield," thought an American advance into the British zone was an improper transgression. Bradley could have confronted Montgomery, but he did nothing.[17]

Even getting to Argentan proved difficult for Patton. On August 12, the town was being guarded by only a single German bakery company. The U.S. 5th Armored Division, just a few miles away, was on the way to occupy it. But, in defiance of orders, the Free French 2nd Armored Division, attached to Haislip's corps, usurped the road, keeping the Americans from moving down it. By the time the Americans could get past the French, a powerful German panzer force had secured Argentan.

Thus a huge gap remained open between Falaise and Argentan, which the Germans used to evacuate the pocket. The Germans did suffer from Allied bomber and fighter strikes, but when a company of the U.S. 90th Division met a Polish company in the burning village of Chambois northeast of Argentan on August 19, most of the Germans had gotten away. Even then the juncture did not create a solid barrier. Germans continued to filter through what was only a porous sieve for several more days. More

than 240,000 Germans escaped in the last twelve days of August alone. They moved swiftly back toward the German frontier.

The French armored division troops, under Jacques Leclerc, had been uninterested in being at Argentan all along. They wanted to liberate Paris. On August 21, Leclerc, totally without authorization, sent a fast motorized contingent to the capital, a hundred miles away. His action raised a howl from the American command and led to a confrontation between Eisenhower and Charles de Gaulle, chief of the Free French. On August 22, Eisenhower backed down and permitted the whole French armored division to move at once to Paris, abandoning Argentan. This caused a huge rift between the Allied command and de Gaulle. The French division and civilian Parisians swiftly took over Paris. The German commander, Dietrich von Choltitz, surrendered on August 25. De Gaulle arrived in the undamaged city on the same day and took command of the French government.

During the last stages of the battle for the Falaise pocket, the senior Allied commanders were already preoccupied with getting to the Rhine River and with overrunning Germany.[18]

In the drive across France, Eisenhower opted for a “broad-front” strategy to ensure that both Britain and the United States could claim the triumph together. This refusal to decide on a single, war-winning drive guaranteed that neither side would get enough fuel and supplies to win a victory in 1944. This was a profound failure of leadership on Eisenhower’s part, and it placed political considerations above military operations and human lives.

If Eisenhower had not taken this course, it would almost certainly have been possible to take advantage of German chaos to penetrate into the heart of Germany—provided that most of the available fuel, ammunition, and other vital supplies were committed to one concentrated blow to cross the Rhine at a single point. This inevitably would have meant that the commander would be Patton, because the 3rd Army was on the east and closest to Germany. Patton most definitely wanted to carry out this operation, but Bradley did not press the matter, and Eisenhower ignored his requests because he did not want to enrage the British.

Montgomery, on the contrary, argued that the major strike should be conducted by his army group. He contended, illogically, that he could drive up the coast and get across the lower Rhine in Holland before the Germans could organize a defense. This route not only was far longer than Patton's but also faced one major river barrier after another. However, the Overlord plan called for eliminating the launching sites of the V-1, the jet-powered flying bomb revenge weapon that Hitler was aiming at England. These sites were located in the Pas-de-Calais. Overlord also called for the capture of Antwerp on the Schelde River in Belgium to serve as a major supply port. Montgomery's move up the coast would uncover the V-1 sites, and was one argument for giving him preference. Patton, on the other hand, argued that a strike into the heart of Germany would end the war quickly and stop the V-1 attacks as well.[19]

Eisenhower gave the most fuel and supplies to Montgomery and allocated to him the U.S. 1st Army and twelve American divisions, totaling twenty-five divisions. But Montgomery's advance had little chance of ending the war quickly. And Patton, left with fifteen divisions and starved for fuel, had little chance of doing so either. Patton, for example, received 2,000 tons of supplies a day, Courtney Hodges's 1st Army, 5,000 tons. By dividing the gasoline supply between Montgomery's and Bradley's army groups, Eisenhower ensured that all would stop well short of the Rhine.

Bradley turned Patton loose before the end of the Falaise pocket battle. He gained a great deal of territory, but his tanks ran out of gas on the Moselle River near Metz on September 5.

Though Montgomery swept past the Pas-de-Calais and captured Antwerp on September 4, 1944, he failed to secure the seaward approaches to the port, and Antwerp remained unusable. In addition, he made a mess of his abortive effort to cross the lower Rhine at "a bridge too far" at Arnhem, Holland, in the Market Garden operation. This operation failed, with huge numbers of casualties.

American anger erupted over Eisenhower's decision to give Montgomery preference in receiving supplies, thereby hobbling Patton. The anger was especially great since Montgomery failed so miserably. The British charged, on the other hand, that Eisenhower should have authorized only a single, Montgomery-led advance on Berlin. They wanted Patton,

who was actually within striking distance of the Rhine, to be stopped entirely, while they wanted Montgomery, who had countless streams and canals to cross, to get all the fuel and supplies.

The British argument had little validity. But—since Patton got some of the gas they thought should have gone to Montgomery—the British possessed an argument that raged on till the end of the war and well beyond it. Eisenhower, in their view, was responsible for the stalemate that came about when the Allies ran out of fuel along the German frontier in September 1944. Critics thus blamed Eisenhower for allowing the U.S. 3rd Army to get bogged down attacking Metz, for the U.S. 1st Army fighting a costly tree-to-tree battle in the Hürtgen Forest just inside the German frontier near Aachen, and for allowing the Germans time to build up strength to attack in the Ardennes during Christmas 1944 in the Battle of the Bulge. These and other clashes along the frontier cost massive Allied casualties.

The British charges against Eisenhower were unfair. But Eisenhower had shown that he did not possess an essential requirement for a successful commander: he was unable to evaluate two opposing arguments and come to a correct decision. Attempting to accommodate the interests and the pride of both the Americans and the British, he guaranteed failure. What is worse, he also guaranteed that the war would go on and that hundreds of thousands of men on both sides would die or be maimed.

Eisenhower violated one of Sun Tzu's most important imperatives. "Warfare," he says, "is the greatest affair of state, the basis of life and death, the way to survival or extinction. It must be thoroughly pondered and analyzed."[20] Eisenhower's duty as supreme commander was to end the war as rapidly and as inexpensively as possible. By dividing his resources instead of concentrating them, he ensured that this would not be done.

The continuation of the war all the way to May 1945, therefore, was largely due to the failure of leadership of Dwight Eisenhower. But another failure had already occurred. This failure was primarily the property of Bradley, though Montgomery shared some of the blame, and indirectly so did Eisenhower, who took no part in the decision. All were unable to grasp the opportunities that Patton presented to them after the Cobra breakthrough.

They could not see that Patton's plan had the potential to end the war in weeks by eliminating the German armies in Normandy, and that it was not necessary to wait to accomplish the task much later along the Rhine River. Both Montgomery and Bradley likewise failed in their conduct of the much less ambitious plan to close the Falaise-Argentan gap. If this effort had been pursued with vigor and determination, they might have captured many of the seasoned German combat troops.[21]

Sun Tzu holds that successful commanders must be able to see ways they can win. Successful commanders can seize unanticipated opportunities when they occur. This requisite vision was not present in the three senior Allied commanders in France in 1944. Only George Patton saw the proper ways forward: first the sweep down the Seine to trap the German armies in Normandy, and then a strike straight for the heart of Germany along the shortest route and on a narrow front.

Thus George Patton's slapping of two psychologically unfit soldiers in Sicilian field hospitals turned out to be a couple of the most costly episodes in the Second World War. They revealed his unstable mental condition. Though Eisenhower finally decided to keep him, Patton was doomed to occupy a subordinate position. If the incidents had not occurred, Patton would have become Eisenhower's closest military adviser, and he would have commanded the American armies in France. Patton as commander would have acted on the opportunities that he saw so clearly, and he would have conducted the kind of full-throttle, fast war of movement that the American army was skilled at and equipped for. Omar Bradley, who moved into the command position Patton would have occupied, had little imagination and never took chances. The result was that the Allies "won the war in the wrong way." They took much longer and they suffered many hundreds of thousands more casualties than were necessary.

TEN

Inchon and the Invasion of North Korea, 1950

The United States faced a most remarkable problem in the summer of 1950. It found itself in a completely unanticipated war with a small Communist state, North Korea, and it was losing. The North Koreans had attacked the American client state of South Korea on June 25, and shattered its underequipped army. Only the swift intervention of American occupation forces in Japan kept North Korea from overrunning the entire Korean peninsula. But the Americans also were unprepared for war, and were swiftly thrown back to the narrow "Pusan Perimeter" around the southern port city of Pusan.

While American leaders were frantically trying to reinforce the perimeter, and while North Korean soldiers were continuously trying to force their way over the Naktong River, the last major barrier in front of Pusan, General Douglas MacArthur, the chief of the American Far East Command, devised a wholly unlikely riposte that would solve the entire problem, would completely avoid the North Korean army on the Naktong, and was precisely in keeping with the doctrine of Sun Tzu.[1]

MacArthur saw an opportunity that no one else saw. He saw that the North Koreans had entirely disregarded the fact that Korea is a peninsula. While the North Korean leaders were focusing on the *land* of the peninsula, MacArthur looked at the water that surrounded it on three sides. He knew

that the U.S. Navy could carry out an amphibious landing anywhere it wanted to on the Korean shoreline, and the North Koreans, with no navy of their own, could do nothing about it.

MacArthur then looked at the double-tracked railroad that ran from North Korea through the South Korean capital of Seoul and on to the south. This railroad was supplying practically all of the food, ammunition, and fuel for the North Korean army along the Naktong. If this railroad were cut anywhere above the North Korean army, it would collapse in a matter of days because it would be deprived of nourishment. And not a shot would have to be fired at it.

MacArthur saw that Seoul was only twenty miles east of its port city of Inchon. If the Americans staged an amphibious landing at Inchon, they had only this short distance to go to sever the railroad, liberate the South Korean capital, and destroy the North Korean army. The most remarkable fact about the Inchon landing is that the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the top leadership of the United States, fought MacArthur's plan almost to the last minute. When they were proved to be so mistaken, MacArthur came to be viewed as a military genius, while the status of the Joint Chiefs sank like a stone. The Joint Chiefs were accordingly inhibited from calling down MacArthur only three weeks afterward when he launched an operation to conquer North Korea that was the extreme of irresponsibility and that brought disaster to American arms.

The case of MacArthur is quite unusual. His abilities and his disabilities—his capacity to see broad opportunities and his propensity to disregard plain facts—made for a crippling combination. His ability to see strategic possibilities brought on hugely ambitious operations. His incapacity to see danger led the effort to destroy North Korea into catastrophe. MacArthur was far from being the balanced commander espoused by Sun Tzu, one who can see potentials and dangers in all situations and can accommodate both in his campaigns.[2]

The defect was not apparent at Inchon because the Americans faced only minuscule North Korean forces, and the power of the U.S. Navy was overwhelming. In the subsequent invasion of North Korea, however, the outcome depended on Red China. Would the Red Chinese intervene or

would they not? The answer to this question required a dispassionate, reasoned, accurate calculation.

Because MacArthur had become larger than life as a result of Inchon, his judgment carried immense weight. He ridiculed the idea that the Chinese would dare come into the war. This conclusion not only turned out to be wholly wrong, but also disregarded repeated Chinese warnings that they would intervene if American forces entered North Korea. The mistake of President Truman and his political advisers was that they listened to MacArthur and not to the warnings coming from Beijing.

The American decisions to land at Inchon and then to conquer North Korea provide some of the most convincing evidence we possess on how the capacity of human beings to make accurate judgments varies greatly between individuals and does not depend on one's background or training. Three civilian leaders—President Truman; W. Averell Harriman, Truman's closest political adviser; and Louis Johnson, secretary of defense—applauded the decision to land at Inchon. But all of the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed it. Omar Bradley, JCS chairman, called Inchon a "blue-sky scheme" and said "Inchon was probably the worst place ever selected for an amphibious landing."[3] At the same time, there is a dangerous propensity of some civilian leaders to attribute wisdom in politics to military commanders simply because they are successful in war. This was the case with Truman and his team of political advisers. None stood up to question MacArthur's opinion that the Chinese would not enter the Korean War.

At the end of World War II, in August 1945, U.S. and Soviet officials set up the 38th parallel as a boundary on the Korean peninsula. U.S. troops were to accept the surrender of Japanese troops south of this line; Soviet troops were to accept the surrender of troops north of this line. But this military boundary quickly became a political frontier in the Cold War, with the United States setting up a client state under Syngman Rhee in the south, and the Soviets establishing a Communist state under Kim Il Sung in the north.

On January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson announced an American defensive perimeter in East Asia that included Japan and the Philippines but excluded Taiwan and Korea. This pronouncement apparently convinced Kim Il Sung that the United States would not intervene if he tried to reunite the peninsula by force. He talked Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator, into supplying offensive arms, including 150 Soviet T-34 tanks, heavily armored monsters carrying high-velocity 85-millimeter guns. The T-34 was the best tank to come out of World War II;

German panzer leader Heinz Guderian credited it with stopping the 1941 German attack on Moscow.

The Americans, fearful that Syngman Rhee would launch an attack northward, had not given the South Koreans any weapons to stop a tank, neither tanks of their own, nor antitank artillery rounds, nor antitank mines, nor the recently developed 3.5-inch “super bazooka” rocket launcher. As a consequence, the T-34s swiftly overwhelmed the South Koreans and drove them in chaos deep into the south on June 25 and the days thereafter.

President Truman believed that the attack on South Korea was the first effort of a Communist conspiracy led by the Kremlin to conquer democratic lands. He reversed U.S. policy at once, ordered General MacArthur to send American forces occupying Japan to aid the South Koreans, and got official backing from the United Nations, but little help except from the British, for a war to push back the North Koreans. Although the Americans suffered many reverses, they slowed the North Korean advance and by August were holding a tight perimeter around Pusan.

With naval forces, Truman also “quarantined” the Chinese island province of Taiwan (Formosa), which had been occupied in October 1949 by Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek after his Nationalists were ousted from the mainland by Mao Zedong’s Communist forces. Truman believed that the Chinese Reds were a part of what the Western democracies were calling “monolithic Communism,” and were part of the Communist conspiracy. This ignored the fact that the Chinese Communist revolution was entirely separate from Soviet Communism, and that the Chinese had no part in the North Korean attack.

American leaders had concluded incorrectly that Communist China was a satellite of the Soviet Union. In fact, the Chinese Communists wanted to complete the unification of their country and to embark on a course of economic development unrelated to the aims of the Kremlin. Protection of Taiwan caused Beijing to conclude that the Americans had formed a secret alliance with Chiang Kai-shek and intended to invade the mainland and drive the Reds out of power. American leaders thus acquired Red China as an unnecessary enemy.

MacArthur's military concept to defeat North Korea reflected pure Sun Tzu doctrine. It required a totally committed North Korean army driving against a UN line, a *zheng* force, that held, but just barely, thereby enticing the North Koreans to fling every ounce of strength against it.

If the North Koreans could be kept focused on trying to eliminate the Pusan Perimeter, the crucial stroke could be delivered by a *qi*, or indirect, force at Inchon, far *behind* the North Korean army.[4]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff fought the Inchon site because of the extremely high tides there and the narrow approach channel. General J. Lawton Collins, the army chief of staff (and noted commander of the U.S. 7th Corps that broke through the Germans lines in Normandy in 1944), and Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, chief of naval operations, urged instead a landing at Kunsan, a small port about a hundred miles south of Inchon and only about seventy miles west of the Pusan Perimeter battle line along the Naktong River.

A landing at Kunsan would have had none of the advantages that a landing at Inchon had. It would have struck the flank of the North Koreans, requiring them only to extend their line across the peninsula. UN forces then would be required to attack frontally up the length of the peninsula, pressing the North Koreans *on* their supplies and reinforcements, not severing them *from* their supplies and reinforcements.

Both Collins and Sherman misunderstood the purpose of strategy. It is to win while reducing the fighting and killing to the least degree possible. As Sun Tzu says, "Attaining one-hundred victories in one-hundred battles is not the pinnacle of excellence. Subjugating the enemy's army without fighting is the true pinnacle of excellence."[5] MacArthur's plan would virtually eliminate the North Korean army along the Naktong without coming anywhere close to it.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had been established under terms of the National Security Act of 1947, which unified the command of the armed forces within a new Department of Defense and set up the National Security Council (NSC) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to address all American security needs. They were a committee, however, and committees seldom think creatively. The biggest creative thinker in regard to Korea was MacArthur.

MacArthur began demanding more troops than currently existed. These demands forced the United States to go on war footing. On July 19, 1950, President Truman announced an immense expansion of U.S. forces. This involved a huge call-up of National Guard units and reservists.

On July 13, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent General Collins and General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the air force chief of staff, to Tokyo to get more information from MacArthur about his plans. The Joint Chiefs were far more worried about a Soviet military threat to Europe than the North Korean threat to South Korea. But MacArthur pooh-poohed the danger in Europe. The Cold War, he said, would be settled in the Far East. And he argued that he should be given absolute priority over other areas.

When Collins asked MacArthur how many troops he would need to reestablish the 38th parallel border, MacArthur said his intention was to *destroy* the North Korean forces, not merely to repulse them. This was contrary to the UN mandate, which was to restore the status quo ante bellum. The North Korean army could not possibly be destroyed unless the North Korean state was destroyed. This would require invasion of North Korea and reuniting the country.

MacArthur was proposing a radical course of action that required a political decision at the highest level. Red China was certain to oppose a forcible reunion of the country. North Korea constituted a vital buffer between the United States and China. Placing American troops on the China-Korea border at the Yalu River would reinforce existing Chinese fears that the United States intended to invade China and reinstate Chiang Kai-shek.

But the Joint Chiefs did not address this matter, and neither did President Truman. Here was an abdication of responsibility, a violation of the first and most important Sun Tzu doctrine. “Warfare,” he says, “is the greatest affair of state, the basis of life and death.” War must be pondered deeply before it is risked.[6]

If in July 1950 the American leaders had faced up to the implications of MacArthur’s purpose, they might have developed a policy that would have assuaged Red China’s fears yet eliminated the military threat of Kim Il Sung. Red China might not have resisted a temporary invasion to topple Kim Il Sung’s government, but would have resisted an invasion that

absorbed North Korea into South Korea. This would have meant the autocratic rule of Syngman Rhee, who was completely dependent on the United States.

But the Truman administration did not address these issues. It did not make a final decision about what to do until September 27, twelve days after the invasion. Then the decision was based on a domestically popular plan to smash North Korea, not on a careful judgment of long-term American national interests—and not on an analysis of how China's anxieties could be mitigated.

The navy and the marines did not want to land at Inchon. Offshore islands slow tidal surges and produce deep mud flats at Inchon. On only four days, September 15 to 18, were tides high enough to cover the mud flats sufficiently to allow Landing Ships, Tank, or LSTs, to float in to shore. The invasion had to come in mid-September or be postponed indefinitely. Surely, navy chiefs said, there must be a better place to land.

On August 23, General Collins, Admiral Sherman, and other top officers from the Joint Chiefs of Staff met with MacArthur in Tokyo to settle the matter. Collins and Sherman pushed once more for Kunsan as the landing site. Collins made a most amazing argument. Kunsan, he said, was connected to roads that would ensure prompt union with American forces in the Pusan Perimeter! He was thinking of linking up the invasion force (10th Corps) with U.S. troops in the south (8th Army), not about severing the North Korean supply line. The entire purpose of Inchon had escaped him.[7]

MacArthur repeated the premise for the Inchon invasion: the North Koreans had committed practically all their forces against the 8th Army. They had no trained reserves to oppose the landing. A landing at Kunsan would allow the North Koreans to create a new front facing both the 8th Army and the 10th Corps, thus requiring a direct assault against the enemy and a bitter winter campaign.

But Collins and Sherman were not convinced. Back in Washington the Joint Chiefs of Staff inclined toward postponing Inchon until they were sure the 8th Army could hold the perimeter. But President Truman called Inchon a daring strategic conception and was sure it would succeed.

Distracted by the endorsement of the president on the one hand, and their own misgivings on the other, the Joint Chiefs gave MacArthur general approval on August 28, but withheld fixing a definite location and reserved the right to reconsider the landing site.[8]

Meanwhile, the North Korean command, knowing its chances of breaking through to Pusan were declining with every day, unleashed a desperate general offensive all around the Pusan Perimeter. The North Koreans had assembled 98,000 men. Against them the UN Command had about 120,000 combat troops, plus 60,000 support personnel.

UN firepower was overwhelmingly greater than North Korean firepower. Ammunition and fuel were still arriving in reduced quantities to the North Koreans, but they received only enough rations for one or two meals a day. By September 1, most North Koreans showed loss of stamina and impaired combat effectiveness.

Nevertheless these hungry and numerically inferior North Korean soldiers attacked. They broke through at several points. But desperate UN defenses and superior weapons finally blunted the incursions and threw the North Koreans back at all points. The fighting was severe, however, and the outcome still undecided. On September 5, 1950, General Walton H. Walker, commander of the 8th Army, considered retreating to a last-ditch line around Pusan harbor. During the night, however, Walker decided there would be no withdrawal.

The news of a possible flight to a “Dunkirk” evacuation zone around Pusan panicked the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They sent a frightened message to MacArthur on September 7 warning of disastrous consequences if the Inchon landing failed.

The message implied that the whole movement should be abandoned. MacArthur fired back that the chances for success were excellent. To back down now, he said, would “commit us to a war of indefinite duration, of gradual attrition and of doubtful results.” The position within the perimeter was not critical, and “the envelopment from the north will instantly relieve the pressure on the south.”[9]

MacArthur’s message should have laid the JCS fears to rest. But it didn’t. After a meeting with President Truman on September 8, they approved the plan, but their agreement remained grudging to the last. Omar

Bradley said, “It was really too late in the game for the JCS to formally disapprove Inchon.”[10]

After all the drama about the feasibility of landing at Inchon, the actual maneuver went off like clockwork, with few losses and no setbacks. Marines quickly seized the city and swiftly moved on toward Seoul, flanked by army troops. The only real obstacle occurred in the streets of Seoul, where a few desperate North Koreans set up roadblocks that had to be beaten down one by one. The process was never in doubt, but the city suffered great damage. The last North Korean defenders filtered out of Seoul on September 28.

Meanwhile the North Korean army facing the 8th Army in the south disintegrated within days. The survivors, hungry, usually without vehicles and mostly without weapons, streamed northward by every unguarded road and path. The North Korean army had virtually ceased to exist.

So it is quite astonishing that the JCS chief, General Bradley, called Inchon “the luckiest military operation in history.”[11] Hardly any operation could have involved less luck and more meticulous elimination of chance.

The Inchon invasion exemplified precisely Sun Tzu’s primary strategic doctrine of combining a *zheng* holding force with a *qi* indirect flanking force that achieves victory. Only a single American commander, General MacArthur, had pressed for this strategy. The senior command organization, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had misunderstood it from the first and opposed it to the last. But a fundamental Sun Tzu maxim had been proved valid.

Now a decision had to be made about the fate of North Korea. What was needed was the application of an axiom that Sun Tzu considers to be the most important of all: a nation should resort to war only if all other methods fail.[12] Compromise, accommodation, acceptance of less-than-perfect solutions, all of these are preferable to combat. The outcome of no war is certain. Losses in war can never be recovered.

At this crucial moment, American leadership failed miserably. All the top leaders followed policies that would have horrified Sun Tzu and that ignored the interests of their country. A war that nobody wanted burst forth.

It brought vast costs and tragedy to all participants. It could, and should, have been avoided.

The Truman administration—thinking on extremely narrow lines of what would be most advantageous to the United States—had come up with a plan to reunify Korea through elections in the north and south.[13] This implied an invasion of North Korea.

No one took Red China into account. Here blank ignorance and miscalculation created perilous conditions. The first great blunder was locating where the danger lay. The policy-makers believed that only Russia might intervene, but that this was unlikely. They thought that China would not respond on its own.

Omar Bradley summed up the official attitude. He said that Red China was under the tight control of Moscow, and that "the Russians were not ready to risk global war over Korea." If Red China ever intended to move, it would be to seize Taiwan, not "help solve Russia's problem in North Korea."[14]

But Red China's interest was not to serve the geopolitical aims of the Kremlin. It was to protect what Beijing felt were vital Chinese concerns. As far back as the Han dynasty in the time of Christ, the Chinese emperors had sought to keep Korea as a shield protecting the North China plain. Already, by its neutralization of Taiwan, the United States had shown itself to be an enemy in Red China's eyes. It could not be expected to accept a U.S. military presence on the other side of the Yalu.

It would have been much more profitable for the United States to face this problem squarely and decide where American national interests lay. They in no way would be served if Red China resisted. The United States had no incentive, given its huge concerns about Soviet ambitions in Europe, to get involved in a war with China.[15]

None of these objections were addressed. On September 27, President Truman authorized destruction of the North Korean army and approved military action north of the 38th parallel.

On October 7, the United States got the UN General Assembly to approve a resolution to unify Korea. It called for "all sections" of the population to join to hold elections for a unified government.

The Red Chinese began building up their forces along the Yalu in mid-August 1950. This came immediately after American officials commenced calls for eliminating North Korea. The most strident was a statement on August 17 by Warren R. Austin, U.S. ambassador to the UN Security Council, saying that the United Nations should see to the elimination of a Korea "half slave and half free."[16]

The most significant event, however, was release of a statement by General MacArthur on August 28 that he had sent to a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) meeting in Chicago implying that the United States should develop Taiwan as a military base and level a direct threat at Communist China. This statement flew in the face of President Truman's wary handling of Taiwan.[17] MacArthur issued his statement without any notification to the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the president. It incensed Truman, and he ordered MacArthur to withdraw it, though it had already been published worldwide.

Chinese anxiety became manifest after Inchon. On October 1, while the UN General Assembly was debating the resolution to hold an all-Korea election, the Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai, announced that crossing the 38th parallel was a possible cause for war.

Red China's strongest warning came in the early hours of October 3, 1950. Zhou Enlai summoned the Indian ambassador, K. M. Panikkar, and informed him that the People's Republic (Red China) would intervene if American troops crossed the 38th parallel, but not if South Korean troops did so alone. Zhou's warning reached Washington through British channels on the morning of October 3.

Astonishingly, official Washington disregarded the warning. In a series of blind and thoughtless responses, American leaders called the warning a propaganda trick. The invasion of North Korea went ahead on October 9.

Exactly what sort of accommodation the United States could have made with Beijing is unknown. Zhou Enlai had left a large loophole by telling Panikkar that movement of South Korean troops across the 38th did not matter. South Korean troops were capable of completing the destruction of the North Korean army remnants, especially if they got more artillery, tanks, and air support.

Even after American troops moved northward, there is a possibility that the Chinese might have been satisfied with a judicious halt at the narrow waist of Korea above Pyongyang, thus leaving them with a modest buffer in front of the Yalu. This is not what the Chinese were saying, but they waited until American and South Korean forces were on Manchuria's doorstep before responding. This argues that the United States could have achieved more by negotiations than it was to achieve by two and a half years of bloody war.

The UN offensive had just got under way when President Truman, worried about the Chinese threat, decided he and MacArthur needed a face-to-face meeting. Truman selected Wake Island, a tiny U.S.-owned atoll 2,300 miles west of Honolulu and 2,000 miles southeast of Tokyo.

It was a strange encounter, not least because it seemed to elevate the general to the president's political equal. Dean Acheson, who declined to go, summed up his objections as follows: "While General MacArthur had many of the attributes of a foreign sovereign . . . it did not seem wise to recognize him as one."[18] The Joint Chiefs of Staff also didn't want to go, so General Bradley went along to represent them.

The meeting took place on October 15, 1950. MacArthur said he believed formal North Korean resistance would end by Thanksgiving. He said there was "very little" chance either the Russians or the Chinese would intervene. The Chinese, he said, "have no air force. Now that we have bases for our air force in Korea, if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang, there would be the greatest slaughter."[19]

Although it was President Truman's job, not MacArthur's, to determine Red China's intentions, MacArthur's status had risen so high that neither the president nor anyone else at Wake Island questioned his views.

MacArthur's invasion plan at Inchon was virtually flawless. But the plan he came up with to occupy North Korea was astonishingly bad and poorly thought out. His orders were a direct violation of Sun Tzu maxims, which call for careful calculation and meticulous, accurate planning before launching a campaign.[20] The proper military decision was to send forces in hot pursuit straight for Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, and to dispatch fast forces overland northeast of Seoul to seal off the remnants of

the North Korean army that had assembled in the “Iron Triangle” of Chorwon, Pyonggang, and Kumwha just north of the 38th parallel. Both operations required speed.

Instead, MacArthur withdrew his only rested force, the 10th Corps, already concentrated at Seoul, and sent it on a long circuitous and time-consuming voyage to an amphibious landing at Wonsan on the Sea of Japan. He assigned the 8th Army, exhausted and out of supplies after having driven up from the Naktong line, to attack northward toward Pyongyang.

There was little emphasis on speed and no attempt to capture the remnants in the Iron Triangle.

By ordering the 10th Corps—the 1st Marine Division and the army’s 7th Infantry Division—to withdraw to Inchon and Pusan and to embark for the amphibious invasion, MacArthur clogged the only ports that could deliver supplies required for the offensive into North Korea. For weeks both divisions were eliminated from the order of battle.

Preparing for the amphibious landing at Wonsan took so long that South Korean soldiers got to Wonsan by foot well before the marines even got into their ships.

MacArthur’s plans were woefully and manifestly wrong, and they raised sincere questions as to his judgment. But the Joint Chiefs, intimidated by the general’s success at Inchon, approved them without comment.

Once Wonsan was captured, MacArthur diverted the 10th Corps to occupy northeastern Korea. The 1st Marine Division and parts of the 7th Infantry Division landed at Hungnam and moved up a narrow mountain road to the Chosin (or Changjin) Reservoir en route to the Yalu River. The remainder of the 7th Division landed at Iwon, while South Korean forces continued on up the coast of Korea toward the Siberian frontier.

Elements of the 8th Army encountered some North Korean opposition on the west, but reached the Chongchon River, about sixty miles south of the Yalu, on October 22. North Korean resistance had become weak and spotty. MacArthur ordered a quick advance by all forward elements straight to the Yalu. Accordingly, numerous small bodies of UN troops, British, American, and South Korean, each one isolated and with no support on either side, struck out for the river.

The lack of resistance, however, was deceptive. On October 6, 1950, the Chinese Communist party's Politburo decided to send "volunteers" to Korea, although no one actually volunteered, and all forces were regulars from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) dressed in Red Chinese uniforms. But the Politburo's decision to call these troops volunteers preserved the fiction that the war was limited to the Korean peninsula. This forced the United States to treat Red China as a neutral power. At the same time it served American interests, for the United States did not want to expand the war into China with all the danger this represented, especially the possibility that the Soviet Union might intervene.

The movement commenced on the night of October 18. A vast force began to slip into North Korea, completely unseen and undetected by American air reconnaissance. Marching by night and hiding by day, the Chinese forces moved in the west to blocking positions on the southern face of the high mountain mass fifty miles south of the Yalu and a few miles north of the Chongchon, and on the east to positions below the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir.

As the U.S. 8th Army moved across the Chongchon, three Chinese armies (each with 30,000 men) secretly faced them, while two additional armies lay hidden in reserve in the mountains. On the 10th Corps front, one Chinese army was deployed south of the Chosin Reservoir, but only one of its three divisions was in a position to challenge the marines and soldiers advancing up the narrow road from the coast.[21]

The Chinese struck without warning on October 25. In a series of devastating blows, Chinese forces shredded a three-division South Korean corps, caused a South Korean regiment to vanish from the order of battle, and shattered one American regiment (the 8th Cavalry), causing one of its battalions to be abandoned for lost. The sudden onslaught so alarmed General Walker that he withdrew all forces, except for two small bridgeheads, to the south side of the Chongchon.

On the 10th Corps front, Chinese forces occupied a hill twenty miles south of the reservoir. This hill dominated the only road north. The Chinese stopped repeated attacks of the 7th Marine Regiment to seize it.

The reaction of the 8th Army, MacArthur, and the Far East Command to the appearance of the Chinese was astonishing. Their first response was

denial that it could be happening. Even as the attacks resulted in shocking losses, the command was reluctant to believe UN forces were facing organized Chinese units.

Then, on November 6, one of the strangest events in the history of warfare took place. The Chinese army, in the full flush of victory, suddenly broke off contact and withdrew entirely from the fight. Australian soldiers with the British 27th Brigade on the west could plainly see the Chinese forces marching away. By the end of the day, all were gone—back into the mountains.

The only plausible explanation for this astounding event is that the Chinese leadership deliberately attacked the UN forces as a warning, and then withdrew in hopes that the United Nations would reconsider its northward movements and stop.

Whatever Beijing's intention, the reaction in Tokyo and Washington was to disregard the evidence. The Far East Command drew no lessons from the events, and no one in Washington raised a red flag.

MacArthur insisted that the march to the Yalu be continued, as if the Chinese action had not taken place at all.[22] Blame has been heaped on MacArthur because he refused to credit the evidence before his eyes. But the same evidence was before the eyes of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the administration leaders. What was needed, of course, was a full stop, and a total reappraisal of the situation. But official Washington did nothing.[23]

As American forces were gathering supplies for the lunge to the Yalu, the Chinese concentrated 180,000 men west of the high, trackless extension of the Taebaek Mountains running northward to the Yalu and southward to the coast near Wonsan, and 120,000 men east of the mountains.[24]

Against this force, the UN Command had assembled 247,000 men, most of them Americans.

The UN offensive jumped off on the morning of November 24, 1950. The Chinese met it at once. On the west they executed a perfect Sun Tzu counterblow. Chinese forces attacked all of the UN elements advancing northward across the Chongchon River, holding them fast in a battle embrace. These blows were all classic *zheng* orthodox strikes. Meanwhile another Chinese force executed the decisive blow—a *qi* indirect strike that

shattered a South Korean division at Tokchon, on the extreme east near the high mountain ridges. Tokchon was well south of the river and east of the main UN concentration along the Chongchon. This was a massive strategic flanking move designed to dislodge the entire UN position along the river. It achieved total success. The Chinese quickly penetrated into the rear of the 8th Army and unhinged the entire line.

Meanwhile, on the 10th Corps front east of the mountains, Chinese forces likewise used classic Sun Tzu methods against individual marine and army elements, holding them in place with *zheng* attacks, and surrounding them and cutting their lines of retreat with *qi* indirect attacks.

On the 8th Army front west of the mountains, all the UN forces except the 2nd Infantry Division and the Turkish Brigade were able to disengage and escape southward. These two forces were along a section of the upper Chongchong that had no roads leading away from the river. Their only way out was to move downstream for twenty-five miles, where there was a road leading south. The 2nd Division suffered 5,000 casualties and the Turks a large part of their 5,000-man force before they were finally able to break away.

The 8th Army withdrew swiftly. By the middle of December it was nervously in place below the 38th parallel and along the frozen Imjin River only a few miles north of Seoul. The initiative had passed over entirely to the Chinese. It had been the longest retreat in American history, 120 miles.

Meanwhile, around Chosin Reservoir, elements of the 1st Marine Division and 7th Infantry Division finally broke through the Chinese forces surrounding them, then staged a “breakout to the coast.” The marines and the soldiers cracked every Chinese roadblock on the way to Hungnam and the sea. It was difficult and exhausting, but the vast majority of the men got through, the last elements arriving at the port on December 11.[25]

While the advance of the marines and soldiers to the coast was going on, all other UN forces in northeast Korea withdrew by ship. A huge fleet evacuated the marines and soldiers from Hungnam. On the day before Christmas 1950, the last troops fired off their last rounds, climbed into waiting landing craft, and pulled away to protecting warships. At 2:36 p.m. December 24, the U.S. fleet turned away and steamed south.

The great effort to conquer North Korea had ended in failure.

Perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from the strange case of Douglas MacArthur is that we should examine every military proposal on its merits, and not assume that a plan is good because a commander has an excellent reputation. If American leaders had been aware of and followed the maxims of Sun Tzu, or if they had merely applied critical judgment to the problem, they would have seen quite plainly that MacArthur's ideas about conquering North Korea were badly flawed.

The first and most blatant error was his disregard of how Red China would respond. Sun Tzu says never to embark on war unless all significant questions about its consequences, most especially its negative consequences, have been answered. Sun Tzu emphasizes that leaders should never allow their anger, hatred, and prejudices to influence them, and equally, should never allow wishful thinking and hope for the best to play a part.[26]

The story of how we blundered into North Korea arouses suspicion that the highest leaders in the United States listened to the assurances of MacArthur, and—because he was brilliant, and they didn't know as much about warfare as he did—they squelched their own misgivings. Sun Tzu's point is that intelligent human beings, whether experts or not, can ask all the important questions about warfare, and by careful analysis, they can get all the answers.

Because of MacArthur's mistakes and because American leaders listened to him, the United States suffered a disastrous defeat, and a war nobody wanted went on for two and a half years. This war finally ended where it had started, around the 38th parallel. The same outcome could have been reached in September 1950.[27]

ELEVEN

The Abiding Wisdom of Sun Tzu

This book shows how Sun Tzu maxims have or have not been applied in some of the most important military campaigns in the past two and a third centuries, and reveals a most enlightening fact: all the Sun Tzu principles are common sense, sincerely and earnestly applied. Commanders who did not use common sense were likely to fail. Those who did use common sense were likely to succeed.

Sun Tzu tells us to look objectively at all sides of a problem—its pitfalls as well as its possibilities. He urges us to determine what we are trying to accomplish, and to focus our main strength and effort on that goal. All this may seem obvious, but we human beings frequently allow our passions, prejudices, and selfish desires to dictate what we do.

Other maxims are: do not attack "well-regulated formations," but induce the enemy to do so and be defeated; win battles by concentration of force, mobility, and surprise; know the enemy's terrain, disposition of forces, and capabilities; do not advance into territory where one can be cut off; and rely on well-thought-out plans to win, not on the sacrifices of soldiers.

None of the Sun Tzu principles is difficult. Every one, when carried out, appears in retrospect to have been the most obvious thing to do. Success came by using intelligent, careful thought to solve a specific problem.

The following examples demonstrate some of the most important principles of Sun Tzu, and show how they have remained the same, despite the vastly different circumstances and problems faced by each of the affected leaders.

Go to extreme limits to avoid war.

Sun Tzu's first axiom is in many ways his most important. "Warfare is the greatest affair of state, the basis of life and death, the way to survival or extinction," he says.[1] The outcome of war can never be certain. Thus it should be the very last choice. Every other possibility should be pursued to the end. Compromises are far preferable to bloodshed and destruction of property and lives.

In the lead-up to the American Revolution, the British leadership paid little attention to this axiom. (See chapter 1.) The thirteen colonies already had a third as many people as Great Britain, and Adam Smith, author of *The Wealth of Nations*, predicted that America would exceed Britain in importance in a century. The only feasible solution for Britain was to grant the colonies complete equality, including equal representation in Parliament. But British leaders offered the colonists few concessions and embarked on an outright war to smash all resistance.

A similar refusal to look for any reasonable alternative to war occurred just prior to World War I in 1914. (See chapter 6.) Both sides were driven by greed and desire for revenge. The British feared the growing economic power of Germany, and France wanted to regain its lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Germany was pushing aggressively its expansion overseas and was largely oblivious to the anxiety this aroused in Britain, while Austria-Hungary wanted to smash Serbia and exclude Russia from the Balkans. None of the major powers was interested in compromise. The terrible war that followed drastically weakened all five powers and set the stage for cataclysmic disasters in the generation that followed.

The United States had little to gain and much to lose if it destroyed North Korea and reunited it with South Korea in 1950. A unified Korea would not increase the power of the United States to any appreciable degree, whereas elimination of the strategic buffer of North Korea in front

of the North China plain would threaten the security of Red China drastically. Beijing warned the United States emphatically that it would go to war to protect this buffer, but the Truman administration and Douglas MacArthur scorned the idea. (See chapter 10.) The administration thought only of what would be most advantageous to the United States, not what would ease tensions in East Asia. The result was a dreadful war nobody wanted that lasted two and a half years, cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and led to a generation of enmity between China and the United States.

Attack the strategy of the enemy.

"The highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy's plans," Sun Tzu says.[2] This is a primary goal. Few countries win their wars unless they find ways to counter the enemy's strategy. Yet the history of warfare shows that commanders frequently do not do so. They only concern themselves with their own strategy.

One of the most flagrant examples of this failure was that of the British in the American Revolution. The American strategy was to avoid being defeated and to wear down the British army. (See chapters 1 and 2.) This strategy was likely to succeed if the British launched repeated campaigns over the vast extent of the thirteen colonies. To attack this strategy, the British needed to find another way to win. A means lay right before their eyes: they could have occupied or blockaded all the major American ports, and protected them with the Royal Navy. The Americans had no navy, and they depended on overseas trade to survive. Closing the ports would almost surely have forced the Americans to compromise. But the British leaders did not examine the American strategy. They were convinced their armies could humble the Americans, so they launched one campaign after another into the colonial interior. All of these campaigns failed, and the Americans won the war.

In the American Civil War, the Union strategy was to occupy the Southern states and beat down the rebellion by main force. The North had virtually nothing to protect its own territory, except a ring of fortresses built around Washington, D.C. The Confederate general Stonewall Jackson saw

this glaring weakness in the North's strategy and proposed to President Jefferson Davis that a Confederate army should cross the Potomac River, occupy Baltimore, cut off the only railroad corridor to Washington from the north, force the Abraham Lincoln administration to abandon the capital, and by "making unrelenting war amidst their homes, force the people of the North to understand what it will cost them to hold the South in the Union at the bayonet's point." (See chapter 4.) Davis refused to accept Jackson's proposal. Robert E. Lee went on to fight a direct war of headlong assaults against Union armies, a method that was bound to lose.

In June 1863 when Lee invaded Pennsylvania, his army reached Carlisle, just west of Harrisburg, and Wrightsville, on the Susquehanna River. Lee knew President Lincoln would demand that the Union army remain between the Confederate army and Washington. Hence, Lee could attack Lincoln's strategy by striking out at once for Philadelphia, the second-largest city in the Union and one on the vital north-south rail corridor along the east coast. If this corridor were cut, the North would be unable to pursue the war. The Union army would be obliged to attack the Confederate army at the first opportunity. If Lee took up a fortified position on any open ridgeline, the Union army would lose. Thus Lee had already achieved a position of almost certain victory. But he was unable to see what he had gained. Instead he rushed back south and got into a fatal encounter battle with the Union army at Gettysburg. (See chapter 5.) This decision lost the war for the South.

In early 1943, after the German dictator, Adolf Hitler, had lost a 250,000-man army at Stalingrad, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein proposed that German forces withdraw to the Dnieper River, 450 miles west of Stalingrad. This would induce the Red Army to advance quickly to cut off the crossings of the river. Germany could attack this Soviet strategy by forming a large army at Kharkov, 150 miles northeast of the crossings. As the Soviets advanced westward, the German forces could drive into their northern flank. As Manstein told Hitler, this would "convert a large-scale withdrawal into an envelopment operation"[3] that would push the Russians against the Sea of Azov to the south and destroy them. It was a plan to convert defeat into victory, but Hitler could never see strategic advantages

and refused. (See chapter 8.) The result was the continued retreat of the German army and defeat.

Combine zheng *direct moves and* qi *indirect moves.*

Zheng, or orthodox, maneuvers and *qi*, or unorthodox, maneuvers are Sun Tzu's fundamental principles leading to success in war, both on the battlefield and in broad strategic maneuvers.[4] In general, one holds the enemy in place with the orthodox, or direct, force and gains victory by striking at a different, usually unexpected, place with the unorthodox, or indirect, force.

The concept embodies a crucial Sun Tzu principle: armies should avoid headlong collisions wherever possible. Instead, they should move like water—going around obstacles, not challenging them frontally. Sun Tzu expresses the same idea in his axiom "The army avoids the substantial and strikes the vacuous."

The battle of Waterloo offers a cardinal example of how commanders on both sides should have used *zheng* and *qi* but did not.

The omission by the British commander, the duke of Wellington, imperiled his army. The omission by Napoléon led to his defeat. (See chapter 3.)

Wellington had lined up the British army along the Mont-Saint-Jean ridgeline, south of Waterloo. Napoléon had formed up one of his corps to assault the left center of this line. Wellington had posted a 17,000-man corps under the Dutch Prince Frederick a dozen miles to the west as a guard force. If, instead, Wellington had moved this corps only a couple miles to the west of the Mont-Saint-Jean line, it would have been in position to crash —as an indirect *qi* force—into the left flank of the French army when it attacked. This would have thrown the French army into chaos. But the move never occurred to Wellington.

Since Wellington had not placed Prince Frederick's corps just beyond his right, or western, flank, Napoléon had an open path to swing one of his own corps in a *qi* strike on the British right flank while Wellington was fully committed to defending against the direct *zheng* French frontal attack. This in turn would have thrown the British army into chaos. But Napoléon

also did not think to make this move. Instead his forces crashed headlong against the British and were crushed.

In May 1862, Stonewall Jackson executed a perfect *zheng* and *qi* maneuver against the Union commander Nathaniel B. Banks. (See chapter 4.) Jackson sent his cavalry straight northward down the Valley Pike. This was the *zheng* strike that locked Banks in his entrenchments at Strasburg. Meanwhile Jackson's main force swung around to Front Royal on the northeast, in a *qi* indirect move that placed Banks in danger of being blocked from retreat and forced to surrender. Banks raced northward at the last moment, but his demoralized and weakened army was shattered at Winchester.

In 1940, Erich von Manstein conceived a spectacular *zheng* and *qi* combination when he induced Adolf Hitler to make a loud and convincing *zheng* direct attack into Holland and northern Belgium that absorbed the attention of the Allies, while the decisive *qi* indirect force of panzers struck almost unnoticed through the Ardennes. (See chapter 7.) This move forced the defeat of France and the evacuation of the British army from Dunkirk.

The *zheng* and *qi* concepts are expressed in another of Sun Tzu's axioms: "Make an uproar in the east, but strike in the west." The entire idea is summed up in a single profound sentence: "The way to avoid what is strong is to strike what is weak." Zheng and *qi* form a complete system of winning battles and campaigns. Their intellectual foundation is that, with deception, one can induce the enemy to misdirect his strongest forces to defend a place that appears to be the primary target but is not, thereby leaving the actual point of attack poorly defended or not defended at all.

Secure intelligent commanders.

Sun Tzu says that one of the elements mandatory for success in war is the selection and support of generals who are wise, credible, benevolent, and courageous. Armies, he says, can be victorious only if "the general is capable and not interfered with by the ruler."[5]

Selecting political and military leaders depends on many factors. Ability and determination may be present, but charisma and chance may be more important. Elected leaders gain their positions from voters, whose

approval is often influenced by emotional or other considerations, not the true talent of candidates. Elected leaders might be good at delegating authority, and they might not. Some elected leaders do not want really able military commanders or other leaders under them who might challenge their authority or might compete with them for elected office. This fear of quality is almost universally true of dictators.

The case with Napoléon Bonaparte is telling. He was always insecure because he gained power by a coup d'etat. Therefore, he appointed field commanders, not because they were competent, but because they would obey him. It was only a matter of time before Napoléon made some mistake that would cause his downfall. It happened at Waterloo. The commanders he chose for the wings of his formation turned out to be incompetent. Although Napoléon failed to use a *qi* flanking force, which could have been decisive, the French still could have won if the wing commanders had seized the opportunities before their eyes. Their failure to do so lost the battle and sent Napoléon into exile on the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic, where he died—years later. (See chapter 3.)

On July 1, 1863, at the close of the first day of Gettysburg, General Robert E. Lee refused the pleadings of General James Longstreet to move the Confederate army to the south of Cemetery Ridge. This would place the Confederates between the Union army and Washington, a move that would threaten the national capital, and a condition that Abraham Lincoln expressly forbade. It would force the Union army off Cemetery Ridge and obligate it to attack the Confederates—and almost certainly be beaten.

General Lee replied: "They [the enemy] are there in position [pointing to Cemetery Hill and Ridge], and I am going to whip them or they are going to whip me."[6]

Here is one of the signal moments in history when the incompetence of a commander is revealed for all to see. (See chapter 5.)

In August 1944, after the Allies had broken out of the Normandy beachhead, the top three Allied commanders—Dwight D. Eisenhower, Bernard Law Montgomery, and Omar Bradley—took no action when General George S. Patton Jr. proposed a swift move of American armies down the Seine River to the English Channel, cutting off all German armies still in Normandy. Here was an opportunity to end the war in weeks, but

they were unwilling to alter the methodical, step-by-step advance to the Rhine River that was called for by the invasion planners. The result was almost nine more months of bitter war and the death of hundreds of thousands of men. (See chapter 9.)

In the summer of 1950, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff fought the plan of General Douglas MacArthur to stage a surprise invasion at Inchon, near the Korean capital of Seoul, and cut off rail connection to North Koreans pressing UN forces in the south. MacArthur's plan was sure to destroy the North Korean army. (See chapter 10.) But the Joint Chiefs of Staff, unimaginative and unwilling to take chances, were overtaken with fear and fought the plan almost to the end. MacArthur, however, received the backing of President Truman and other civilian leaders, and the invasion was a complete success.

We can draw from these facts an inescapable conclusion: a leader who cannot see is doomed to failure. A Sun Tzu requirement for a successful commander is one who can take into consideration all the factors in a given situation, and then act on them. Finding such leaders should be the goal of all governments and armies. Of course we will sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. But we should always have before our eyes the example of Adolf Hitler. His inability to see drove his nation to ruin, and he is the kind of leader that we must avoid at all costs.

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NOTES

In these notes, some references give only the last name of the author or editor or the last name and a short title. These works are cited in full in the Selected Bibliography. References not listed in the bibliography are cited in full the first time they appear in the notes of each chapter and then are cited by author and short title afterward. Numbers in the notes refer to the pages.

INTRODUCTION: To Avoid Strength, Strike Weakness

1. Whether Sun Tzu actually existed is not known. The Art of War, the short thirteen-chapter work attributed to Sun Tzu (which means Master Sun), may have evolved over time from the recorded teachings of some unknown strategist or strategists during the Warring States period in China, from the sixth to the late third centuries b.c. Some scholars argued that the work was heavily rewritten or even concocted many centuries after the supposed existence of Sun Tzu (about 400 b.c.). But in the 1970s copies of the text on bamboo and wooden strips were unearthed in two widely separated archaeological sites, in Shandong and Qinghai provinces. The texts dated back to the former Han dynasty, one as early as the second century b.c., and they were very close to the traditional text. The scholar John Minford writes, quoting the French scholar Jean Lévi, that the final text is probably the collective "product of a long process of sedimentation of strategic reflection, which eventually crystallized into the form of the manual." See Minford, xxii–xxiii.
2. Griffith, v. Basil H. Liddell Hart's celebrated concept of the indirect approach to warfare is essentially an application of Sun Tzu's combination of an orthodox holding force (zheng) combined with an unorthodox force (qi) that strikes indirectly at an unexpected place. "I began to realize that the indirect approach . . . was a law of life in all spheres," Liddell Hart writes. "Its fulfillment was seen to be the key to practical achievement in dealing with any problem where the human factor predominates. . . . The indirect approach is as fundamental to the realm of politics as to the realm of sex. . . . As in war, the aim is to weaken resistance before attempting to overcome it; and the effect is best attained by drawing the other party out of his defenses." See Liddell Hart, Strategy, 18.
3. Mao Tse-tung: On Guerrilla Warfare (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1961), and Sun Tzu: The Art of War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), both translated and introduced by Samuel B. Griffith. A Jesuit missionary to Beijing, Father J. J. M. Amiot, published a French translation of Sun Tzu's work in Paris in 1771. It was issued again in a French anthology in 1782. There also were four translations into Russian and one into German. Before Griffith's work, there were five translations into English, none of which was satisfactory, including that of Lionel Giles in 1910, which left much to be desired. In recent years a number of good translations have appeared. In this volume, I refer as my main source to Sawyer, The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China.

ONE: Saratoga, 1777

1. Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt, 1921), 4.
2. Adam Smith gives a full discourse of this concept in the third part of chapter 7 in book 4 of The Wealth of Nations.
3. The first two sentences of chapter 1 of Sun Tzu's Art of War are, "Warfare is the greatest affair of state, the basis of life and death, the way to survival or extinction. It must be thoroughly pondered and analyzed."
4. "To effect an unhampered advance, strike their vacuities," Sun Tzu says. See Sawyer, 167.
5. Strategically, Americans were quite vulnerable to a blockade. They depended on trading their agricultural, forest, and iron products with the mother country in exchange for the manufactured products that Britain had forbidden or actively discouraged the colonies from producing on their own. Americans exported tobacco, grain, fish, pig iron, lumber, indigo, pitch, tar, sailing ships, rum, and other products, and they imported sugar and molasses, coffee, tea, spices, and many needed manufactured goods. Over time, economic deprivation would have diminished the influence of the patriots and increased the voice of the loyalists in urging the colonies to reach an accommodation with Britain. In 1759, New England sent to England goods valued at £38,000 and imported goods from England valued at £600,000.
6. A flotilla posted at Portsmouth could have blocked all access to the ports on Chesapeake Bay. Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware, need not to have been occupied. These ports could have been blockaded by warships stationed in the upper Delaware Bay.
7. Mahan, 156. Mahan is referring to using the Royal Navy to seal off the Hudson River and Lake Champlain and thus isolate New England. He makes no specific reference to a full-blown blockade of American ports, but the concept is implicit in his comment (p. 157) that if France had not entered the war, Britain "would have been able to reduce the Atlantic seaboard."
8. Ibid., 156.
9. For an analysis of Sun Tzu's thinking on this subject, see Sawyer, 155–56. Sun Tzu admonishes commanders to recognize existing elements that can be exploited or to create opportunities—to not depend on opportunities materializing on their own and to never rely on chance or fortuitous circumstances.
10. Eighteenth-century European armies were largely composed of intensely drilled mercenaries drawn from the dregs of society. Wars were largely between kings to settle dynastic disputes. There was little emphasis on loyalty to one's country. Men were not motivated by patriotism. Few decent men were willing to undergo the ferocious discipline and merciless punishments of military service. Soldiers were taught to fear their officers more than the enemy. They were not allowed to mingle with the civilian population, for fear that they would terrorize the people or desert. In peacetime, soldiers were kept in barracks. They were well fed and clothed but were allowed little freedom. In the field, troops were forbidden to forage, and they were fed from storage depots called magazines. A European army was supposed to carry eighteen days of rations with it. The soldier himself carried bread for three days; the bread wagon that followed each company carried bread for six days; and the wagons of the quartermaster carried flour for nine days. See Delbrück, 409. However, armies generally didn't advance for more than a week because new magazines had to be set up if an army marched into enemy territory. Soldiers were expensive, and generals usually sought to avoid battle. Most campaigns were attempts to force the enemy to withdraw by maneuvering on his line of supply. But once battles were joined, they were fought with fury and tenacity and were usually headlong direct assaults. Casualties could be devastating. In the Seven Years' War, for example, in each of four battles involving Prussians, more men were killed than in all of the fighting in the campaigns of the French

Revolution up to and including Napoléon's Italian campaign of 1796–1797. These battles were Prague, 1757; Zorndorf, 1758; Kunersdorf, 1759; and Torgau, 1760. See Delbrück, 402. The English duke of Marlborough was key to developing new offensive battle tactics that characterized eighteenth-century battles. The tactics were made possible by the flintlock musket (whose flint sparks more reliably ignited gunpowder than the match of the older matchlock musket), and by the universal adoption of the socket bayonet in the last years of the seventeenth century. Firing was usually delivered at close range—thirty to fifty paces—and under cover of the smoke from the discharges, the assault was driven home with the bayonet. Marlborough's tactics were to pin the enemy down by persistent infantry attacks, then to break him by shock action of the cavalry, using the sword or saber only. Marlborough allowed his cavalry only three pistol or musket shots during an entire campaign, and these were to be used to protect horses while grazing, not in combat. The new tactics were deadly to both attacker and defender. The most staggering losses occurred to one side when it buckled from attack and collapsed in disorder. In these circumstances, entire regiments and sometimes whole wings of a retreating army were destroyed or forced to surrender. The battle of Blenheim in Bavaria on August 13, 1704, is an example of the extreme costs of combat when generals decided to fight. Marlborough, commanding an allied army of English, Dutch, Germans, and Austrians, met a superior French and Bavarian army on the banks of the Danube River. Marlborough sent infantry to hold in place the enemy garrisons in two villages. The allied soldiers endured enormous casualties in frontal attacks on these villages. The resolution of the battle occurred when Marlborough launched a direct infantry assault on, followed by a cavalry breakthrough of, the French line between these two villages. The assault crushed French opposition. Nine French infantry battalions holding this line (about 7,000 men) were cut down to the last man. The French and Bavarians lost 38,000 men, more than half of their entire army. The allies lost 4,500 men who died and 7,500 who were wounded, or about a quarter of the allied force. See Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 127–55.

11. Sawyer, 162.

12. Strategically this was an excellent plan. New England was politically the most important region of colonial America and was the cockpit of the revolution. Along with New York, it was the easiest to invade because Canada could be used as a base of operations. Besides, the British already possessed New York City as their primary power center. If the rebellion could be extinguished in New England and New York—and the British army was strong enough to carry this out—the British generals believed the central and southern colonies could be subdued piecemeal over time.

13. Sawyer, 177.

14. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 161–86.

15. Ketchum, Saratoga, 86–87.

16. Ibid., 104–5, 260–61. When Howe received Germain's letter, he was on the voyage to capture Philadelphia. Howe replied to Germain on August 30, 1777, that it was already too late to cooperate with Burgoyne's campaign.

17. Sawyer, 169.

18. Ketchum, Saratoga, 283.

19. Ibid., 161.

20. Ibid., 158.

21. Burgoyne's goal was Albany, on the right, or west, bank of the Hudson. He crossed to the west bank near Fort Edward because there was no opposition there and because the river broadened as it flowed southward, making it more difficult to cross at lower points. Any farther advance down the east bank would likely mobilize strong American opposition, which would make it

difficult to force a lower passage. Since Burgoyne had made no move toward New England, the Americans were certain that Albany was his objective. Thus they were not obliged to divide their troops to protect New England and could concentrate at Bemis Heights.

22. British Major General Charles Grey led 1,200 British troops, mainly light infantry from thirteen regiments, in a night attack against Wayne, who had about twice as many men. Grey ordered his troops to remove flints in order to prevent them from firing their muskets. He was subsequently nicknamed "No Flint" Grey. The attackers used only their bayonets and achieved complete surprise. Wayne's force was routed and fled, losing 53 men who were killed, 113 who were wounded, and 71 who were captured. Here was a successful employment of the British doctrine of winning "with zeal and with bayonets only." However, it was achieved against an American force that was taken unawares. The conditions of the Paoli battle were extremely unusual and not conducive to being repeated widely.

23. Howe had divided his army, sending some troops to seize a river fort (Billingsport) near Chester, detailing others to escort supplies up from Head of Elk, and keeping a large detachment in Philadelphia. The remaining force, about 9,000 men, was encamped at Germantown. General Washington devised a plan to send American forces southward in an attack down four roads to Germantown. Maryland and New Jersey militia were to move down the easternmost road. Pennsylvania militia were to occupy the western one, or Manatawny Road, near the Schuylkill River. Three divisions under Nathanael Greene would proceed down Limekiln Road and strike the British right, or eastern, flank. John Sullivan's column of three brigades was to head directly into Germantown on the Skippack Road, followed by the division of William Alexander. The main strike was from Sullivan's three brigades. They rolled back the British for two miles. But, getting no help from the east, because Greene was slow to arrive, Sullivan was forced to spread out Anthony Wayne's brigade in that direction. American General Adam Stephen, leading his men westward toward the sound of the guns, blundered into Wayne's men and began firing at them. Believing the British were about to enfilade, Wayne's men fled, panicking the rest of Sullivan's force and causing the entire attack to fall apart. Washington's plan was too sophisticated for officers who lacked much field experience, while many of the American troops were raw and subject to panic. Howe, realizing his mistake in dividing his troops, abandoned Germantown and pulled his army back to Philadelphia.

24. Spain declared war on Britain a year later, on June 21, 1779, but refused to recognize American independence. On December 20, 1780, Britain declared war on the Netherlands because of clandestine Dutch trade with the American states.

TWO: The Carolinas, Yorktown, and Independence, 1781

1. Charles Dickens gives the essence of British class distinctions in The Chimes: "Oh let us love our occupations, Bless the squire and his relations, Live upon our daily rations, And always know our proper stations." See Alan C. Jenkins, A Village Year (Exeter, England: Webb and Bower, 1981), 50.

2. Sawyer, 161.

3. Catastrophe almost always results when an army attempts to hold a city against a stronger enemy that can sever contact with the outside, cut off the food supply, and commence devastating bombardment. This has been true throughout history. Alexander the Great took

months but eventually overwhelmed the Phoenician city of Tyre in present-day Lebanon. The Confederates made the same mistake in trying to hold Vicksburg, and Adolf Hitler lost an entire army of 250,000 men trying to hold Stalingrad in World War II. A weaker army should never allow itself to get bottled up in a city or fortress, but should move into the open where it has the opportunity to maneuver and to fight.

4. Theodore A. Dodge, Alexander (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1890; London: Greenhill, 1991), 657. Citation is to the Greenhill edition.
5. There's an old joke that the people of South Carolina were so convinced of the importance of their main town that mothers taught their children that the Ashley and Cooper rivers come together at Charleston to form the Atlantic Ocean.
6. Mao Zedong, 9–10.
7. Ketchum, Victory at Yorktown, 99.
8. It is much more difficult to hit a moving target when one is firing down at it than when one is firing from below at a stationary target silhouetted against the skyline. Aim while firing down is usually much less accurate because the target's elevation (that is, the distance from the firer as well as the angle of fire) is changing constantly.
9. Nathanael Greene and a small American force returned to South Carolina in the spring of 1781 and ousted the British from Camden and three other outposts in the interior.
10. Germain wrote to Clinton on May 5, 1781: "I am commanded by His Majesty to acquaint you that the recovery of the southern provinces, and the prosecution of the war by pushing our conquests from the south to north, is to be considered as the chief and principal object for the employment of all the forces under your command, which can be spared from the defense of the places in His Majesty's possession." See Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 316.
11. As J. W. Fortescue, the celebrated historian of the British army, writes, "The truth was that Clinton, Cornwallis and Germain were all of them in favor of a campaign in the middle colonies. Clinton wished to await the arrival of reinforcements and of a covering fleet, and meanwhile secure a naval base. Cornwallis was for evacuating New York, transferring the principal base of the British to the Chesapeake, and opening the campaign there at once. Germain desired to combine both designs after some incomprehensible fashion of his own." See ibid., 323, citing J. W. Fortescue, A History of the British Army, vol. 3, 396–97.
12. A strategy of holding or blockading the American ports would cause the Royal Navy to disperse its ships to protect each location. Thus, the French could concentrate their fleet to strike at one of these locations and be certain of superiority. However, such a strike almost never could be so sudden as to trap a protecting British squadron in harbor. It could almost certainly put out to sea. Other British ships could be swiftly assembled from other ports to challenge a French fleet, so its superiority at any location would be temporary. A French fleet could break a sea blockade for a short time—in Chesapeake or Delaware bays or covering Newport, as examples—but it would be unlikely to defeat a British land garrison protecting a port. This was shown most graphically at Savannah, where British defenses turned back a mostly French land attack, causing the French fleet to return to France. In any event, the length of time available for a French fleet to besiege and attack a British-held port would be extremely limited, because all Royal Navy ships within reach would be sailing at top speed to challenge it.
13. Sun Tzu writes, "If I determine the enemy's disposition of forces while I have no perceptible form, I can concentrate my forces while the enemy is fragmented. If we are concentrated into a single force while he is fragmented into ten, then we attack him with ten times his strength." See Sawyer, 167.
14. Luvaas, 80.

15. In 1778, France had 80 ships of the line in good condition, while Spain had 60 ships of the line. The Royal Navy had about 150 ships of the line out of a total of 228 ships of all classes. A ship of the line generally had 74 guns, though a few had more and some had fewer. The French and Spanish ships were superior in size and artillery. A British advantage was unity of aim, whereas naval coalitions are usually unable to work long in concert. But Britain was compelled to fight a war around the globe. It had to divide its sea power to protect the home islands and to cover North America, the West Indies, the Mediterranean, and India and the East Indies. A flotilla in any one of these theaters was limited in size. Thus France, though weaker overall, could concentrate superior force in one theater for a limited period.
16. Washington was not gifted with much strategic insight. He had been focused on the British base at New York since being ousted from the city in September 1776. But a French assault on New York would not likely have been decisive. One problem was that the deep-drafted French ships would have had trouble forging the shallow bar at Sandy Hook. Thus a naval bombardment of the New York defenses would have been difficult. The Royal Navy ships stationed at New York would very likely have been able to escape to the open sea. British fortifications were formidable and probably would have withstood the first French onslaught. De Grasse could not keep his fleet at New York long because all British ships within range would converge on him. Not for a moment did French policy contemplate risking France's largest fleet in an all-out showdown with the British in order to bring about the independence of the United States. France's main goal was humbling Britain, not helping America. When Royal Navy ships arrived in force, the siege would be broken. So the window of opportunity would be small and success problematic. Even in the unlikely event that a French assault was successful and the British garrison forced to surrender, British naval power could still have been concentrated in the Chesapeake, and Cornwallis could have embarked on the new campaign to subdue the middle colonies. On the other hand, if de Grasse struck for the Chesapeake, not New York, a successful sealing off of the Virginia Capes would be sufficient to force Cornwallis's surrender, with no other action required by de Grasse's fleet.
17. Ketchum, Victory at Yorktown, 139.
18. For an analysis of the brilliant work of Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Adams to gain a peace treaty as well as expansion of the American frontiers to the Mississippi River, see Bevin Alexander, How America Got It Right (New York: Crown, 2005), 11–14.
19. Sawyer, 157.

THREE: Napoléon at Waterloo, 1815

1. Leonard Krieger, Kings and Philosophers, 1689–1789 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 18–19.
2 Fuller, The Conduct of War, 46.
3. Bevin Alexander, How the South Could Have Won, 157.
4. Delbrück, 434.
5. Sun Tzu says to avoid all actions not based on detailed analysis of the situation and study of the combat options, which must take into consideration one's capabilities. Hence prejudices and anger should never be permitted to influence decisions. One should create opportunities for victory. One should never depend on them appearing on their own. See Sawyer, 154–55.

6. Napoléon owed much to French military thinkers who came before him. The most important of them were Pierre-Joseph de Bourcet (1700–1780); Jacques-Antoine-Hypolyte, comte de Guibert (1743–1790); Jean-Baptiste Vaquette de Gribeauval (1715–1789); and Chevalier Jean du Teil (1733–1820). Bourcet conceived a "plan with branches," or dividing an army into several dispersed columns and marching them on separate targets. Since it is impossible for an enemy to be in strength everywhere, a commander can mislead the enemy by dividing his forces, making the enemy believe the main force is coming to a place different from the one he expects. The enemy would be forced to abandon his own plans and disperse his troops to meet the new threats. The enemy also might concentrate on one main point and weaken secondary points. A commander following Boutcet's plan could gain at least one of his objectives. But Bourcet insisted that columns remained close enough so two or more could combine to overwhelm an objective weakened by the enemy's division of his own forces. Guibert conceived of a more mobile form of warfare. He invented the breaking up of solid army columns into separate divisions that could march on a separate route. If an army was divided into a number of divisions moving on different roads, the enemy would be confused, allowing the commander to choose where he could strike with the best chance of success. Guibert also wanted to end the existing practice of private contractors bringing food to troops on the march from magazines or supply bases in the rear. He wanted army officers to learn supply. He also wanted an army to live at the enemy's expense in their own country. The kind of soldier that could operate in the environment Guibert advocated did not exist in the mercenary armies of the eighteenth century. A freer, more self-reliant soldier dedicated to his task and his country was required. This sort of soldier materialized in the largely volunteer French armies that came with the revolution. They could be trusted to forage for food, and not desert at every opportunity. Guibert also advocated reducing the weight of cannons so as to increase their mobility. His aim was to achieve quick concentrations of cannons at a single point on the enemy's line, where they could create gaps for a decisive breakthrough. Finally, Guibert advocated that a commander never attack an enemy headlong, but he should immediately turn or flank the enemy's position. This would force the enemy to move, thereby ending the static warfare that was common in the period. Gribeauval's contribution was in vastly reducing the weight of field artillery, as advocated by Guibert. Du Teil created light horse-drawn smoothbore cannons that could keep up with the troops. His aim was to get a large number of guns quickly to a weak point in the enemy line, and to force a breach there with cannon fire. In 1788–1789 Napoléon, only nineteen years old, commanded a demonstration squad at the Artillery Training School at Auxonne, where du Teil's new artillery theories were being tried out. Here, Napoléon formed the basic of his military thinking by actual practice and by reading military treastises. See Bevin Alexander, How Great Generals Win, 97–100.
7. Dodge, 197; Fuller, The Conduct of War, 48–49. Napoléon never articulated a coherent analysis of his ideas about war. However, campaigns reveal 1) his invariable reliance on the offensive; 2) his trust in speed to economize time and 3) to effect strategic surprise; 4) his insistence on concentrating superior force on the battlefield, particularly at the decisive point of the attack; and 5) his carefully thought-out protective (or defensive) system.
8. Fuller, The Conduct of War, 48–51.
9. Parker, 204–5. Napoléon's great blind spot was his inability to see that a more perfect peace is the true aim of war. Achieving a just and enduring peace should be the ruling idea of policy, and victory the means toward achieving it. The nineteenth-century Prussian theorist on war, Carl von Clausewitz, was equally blind to the true aim of war. His theory that violence should be pushed to its utmost bounds ends in failure. The English military historian J. F. C. Fuller writes that a far better theory of war is offered by the French philosopher Charles de Secondat, the baron de

Montesquieu (1689–1755): “Nations should do each other the most good during peacetime and the least harm during wartime without harming their true interests.” See Fuller, The Conduct of War, 76.

10. Napoléon wanted Europe to share in the new wealth being created in Britain by the machines of the Industrial Revolution. “Why should they [the English] alone reap the benefits which millions of others could reap as well?” he asked. Napoléon believed that Britain profited solely from trade. He saw Europe as losing. He did not understand that free trade would create more wealth for everyone. For this reason Napoléon set up the Continental System to prevent British trade with Europe. But this system deprived the Europeans of goods that Britain alone could provide. This led to deep opposition to Napoléon’s policy and to its ultimate failure. Britain was threatened by loss of trade, but it also felt that a united Europe would jeopardize its survival as the dominant maritime power. This was not necessarily so, and a more open trade policy by Napoléon would have reduced this fear.
11. The English military strategist J. F. C. Fuller understood Napoléon’s obsession quite clearly. “In his first campaign in Italy (1796–1797),” he writes, “his aim was to seek out his enemy and destroy him in battle. This, and that he violated neutral territory, lived on the country, made war self-supporting by exactions and plunder, and pressed home his victories with relentless pursuits, shocked his contemporaries, who looked on these unmannerly operations, not as legitimate acts of war, but as the incursions of a barbarian.” See Fuller, The Conduct of War, 44.
12. Ibid., 54.
13. The narrative on the Waterloo campaign is drawn from Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 494–539; Creasy, 298–302; Chandler, On the Napoleonic Wars, 134–39, and Waterloo; Blond, 469–99; Georges Lefebvre, Napoleon: From Tilset to Waterloo, 1807–1815 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 358–69. See also Colin, and Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon.
14. Sawyer, 156. Sun Tzu does not specify the central position, but it is implicit in his admonition as one of several ways to maneuver one’s army into a tactically advantageous position, concentrate on focused targets, exploit terrain, and aim at a decisive objective.
15. Ibid., 161, 163. Sun Tzu says to engage the enemy only if one’s forces are superior to the enemy’s or at least match them. One should retreat otherwise. “A small army that acts inflexibly will become the captives of a large army,” he writes. Sun Tzu also says one cannot make the enemy conquerable, one can only make oneself unconquerable. “Being unconquerable lies with yourself, being conquerable lies with the enemy.” One can be unconquerable whether one has inferior or superior forces. If inferior, one should withdraw and seek a different approach; if superior, one can contemplate victory, but actual victory will depend on what the enemy does. This implies that victory comes as a result of deceptive actions and inventive strategy, not because one merely has a larger army. Small armies can defeat large armies by strategic or tactical moves that make them superior in critical situations, even if they are weaker overall.
16. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 495.
17. Sawyer, 169.
18. This concept is embodied in the following Sun Tzu admonition: “The highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy’s plans; next is to attack their alliances; next to attack their army; and the lowest is to attack their fortified cities [which by inference also means any heavily fortified position].” Finding out the enemy’s plans is the same as determining the enemy’s strategy. As part of this concept Sun Tzu says to engage the enemy only if one’s forces are superior to the enemy’s or at least match the enemy’s. Otherwise, one should retreat. See ibid., 161.
19. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 503.
20. Ibid., 510.

21. Fear that they were about to be assaulted on their rear unhinged the soldiers of Vandamme's 3rd Corps. Many took flight, and one of Vandamme's division commanders turned his cannons on fugitives who were running away. The Prussians took advantage of the disorder in the 3rd Corps and assaulted St. Amand vigorously. Had the Young Guard of the Imperial Guard not arrived to counterattack, the entire 3rd Corps would probably have disintegrated.
22. By driving into the Prussian line at Ligny, Napoléon pushed the two westernmost Prussian corps westward, the only direction they could go initially to avoid the Imperial Guard and pursuing French cavalry. They then could move north. Napoléon assumed that, once clear of the battlefield, they would turn northeast toward their supply base at Liège.
23. Michel Ney was the preeminent example of Napoléon's refusal to raise up responsible military leaders. By appointing only commanders who would obey him, he never developed leaders with great military skill who were capable of taking charge and winning battles on their own. At Waterloo, therefore, Napoléon had few choices, none of high capability. Ney had a record of outstanding bravery but no record of outstanding leadership. Only Marshal Louis-Nicolas Davout exhibited high command capability, and Napoléon never advanced him to positions where he might threaten his authority. Ney was known as a touchy and temperamental commander. He was so impulsive while serving in Spain that he was sent home in near-disgrace in 1811. After Waterloo, Napoléon acknowledged that it had been a great mistake to employ him. See Ney, Michel, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, Macropedia (Chicago: 1978), vol. 13, 55–57; Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 494–95.
24. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 519–20.
25. Ibid., 521.
26. Grouchy had actually learned at 10:00 p.m. on June 17 that the Prussians were concentrating at Wavre. That's when he sent off his message to Napoléon. He should have recognized that the two armies were only nine miles apart and could readily unite. He should have turned his two corps northwest between Wavre and Mont-Saint-Jean at once. If he had moved immediately, he would have had time to block the Prussians entirely from aiding the British. By 11:30 a.m. on June 18, the Prussians already had moved so far toward Mont-Saint-Jean that he could only strike the flank of the advancing corps.
27. Sawyer, 164–65.
28. Ibid., 168, 170.
29. Ibid., 159.
30. Ibid., 157.
31. Account of Captain Rees Howell Gronow, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Waterloo.
32. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 532.
33. Ibid., 530.
34. Waterloo, 18 June 1815: Charge of the Imperial Guard, 7 p.m., Captain H.W. Powell, First Foot Guards, at http://home.iprimus.com.au/cpcook/letters/pages/waterimp.htm.
35. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 2, 537–38.

FOUR: The Civil War Campaigns of 1862

1. This concept is spelled out by Sun Tzu: "If I dare ask, if the enemy is numerous, disciplined, and about to advance, how should we respond to them? I would say, first seize something that

they love for then they will listen to you." Two other related admonitions: "If the enemy opens the door, you must race in." "Attack what they love first." See Sawyer, 179, 183.

2. The narrative on the 1862 campaigns is largely drawn from Bevin Alexander, Lost Victories, Robert E. Lee's Civil War, and How the South Could Have Won.
3. It never occurred to General McClellan that the Confederate army around Fairfax should have been challenged with a strong move directly against it. This would have held the Rebel army in place and prevented it from interfering with the decisive Union movement by sea to Fort Monroe and a drive up the peninsula to Richmond. A Union frontal confrontation would have been a SunTzu zheng, or orthodox direct movement. McClellan's march up the peninsula would have been a Sun Tzu qi, or unorthodox indirect movement. With the main Confederate army unable to extricate itself, McClellan would have faced little opposition. By ignoring the opportunity, McClellan permitted Joseph E. Johnston's Rebel army to march to Richmond and to challenge him with nearly its full strength. McClellan's peninsula campaign, therefore, was a complete violation of Sun Tzu's fundamental method of achieving victory in battle. The North had ample forces to carry out such a move. Nathaniel B. Banks's army of 23,000 men and Irvin McDowell's corps of 38,000 men, if combined, would have been only slightly inferior to Johnston's army, and troops from the forts encircling Washington could have been called upon. McClellan's army of 100,000 men would have been unaffected.
4. Since Shenandoah Valley streams drain northward into the Potomac River, movement southward in the valley is up, not down.
5. Sun Tzu says, "One who does not know the plans of the feudal lords [that is, the enemy] cannot prepare alliances beforehand. Someone unfamiliar with the mountains and forests, gorges and defiles, the shape of marshes and wetlands cannot advance the army. One who does not employ local guides cannot gain advantages of terrain." See Sawyer, 169. Magruder's strength as well as his defensive fortifications could readily have been determined by spies. In any event, Magruder's manpower could not have been but a fraction of McClellan's because McClellan had positive information that the bulk of the Confederate army was at Richmond.
6. Ibid., 161.
7. In the Civil War and in most wars up to World War II, soldiers marched on foot to their destinations. They marched in formations, usually columns or files (front to back), and in a number of ranks (across, usually three or four files marching beside each other)—hence the term "rank and file" for private soldiers as a body. The military term for this moving in formation was "marching in ranks." Since troops had to "remain in ranks" in order to march with the formation, anyone who dropped by the wayside "fell out of ranks," while those who did not "remained in ranks."
8. Allan, History of the Campaign, 85.
9. Goodwin, 432.
10. Sun Tzu says, "Configurations of terrain are an aid to the army. Analyzing the enemy, taking control of victory, estimating ravines and defiles, the distant and near, is the way of the superior general." This means that a skillful general estimates fully the difficult and the easy aspects of terrain, the advantageous and the harmful, the distant and the near. "One who knows these and employs them in combat will certainly be victorious. One who does not know these nor employ them in combat will certainly be defeated." See Sawyer, 177.
11. The War of the Rebellion, vol. 12, part 3, 859. See also Bevin Alexander, Lost Victories, 59, note 16.
12. Jackson's first proposal to Lee was to ask for 5,000 reinforcements to send to Edward Johnson to stop Frémont's advance temporarily. Jackson then intended to march his army northward to Luray, cross at Thornton Gap (present-day U.S. Route 211) to Sperryville on the eastern slope of

the Blue Ridge, and from there turn north, leaving the enemy in doubt as to whether he was aiming at Front Royal to the northwest or Warrenton to the northeast. Warrenton was only twenty-five miles from Centreville and the main Federal positions guarding Washington. This march along a single line would immobilize the Washington garrison, keep Irvin McDowell's 38,000-man corps from marching to the aid of McClellan, and force Banks to retreat, since his lines of supply would be threatened—all with practically no casualties. Lee could not promise any more troops, however, and Jackson was forced to abandon this plan. But it demonstrates Jackson's strategic brilliance in a most graphic manner.

13. Henderson, vol. 1, 288. Citation is to the Konecky and Konecky edition.

14. The War of the Rebellion, vol. 12, part 3, 892–93; Allan, History of the Campaign, 88.

15. The War of the Rebellion, vol. 12, part 3, 896–98. There is no record of Lee's response, but he probably got President Davis's approval. See Bevin Alexander, Lost Victories, 76, note 7.

16. Sawyer, 161.

17. Henderson, vol. 1, 174–76. Citation is to the Konecky and Konecky edition. Henderson's source for Jackson's proposal was a personal letter he received from General Smith.

18. Sawyer, 160.

19. All of Jackson's proposals to Colonel Boteler are recorded in a narrative by A. R. Boteler in Southern Historical Society Papers, Richmond, Va., vol. 40, 165, 172–74.

20. The first commander of the Army of Northern Virginia was Pierre G. T. Beauregard of Louisiana, who commanded at the battle of First Manassas, or First Bull Run, on July 21, 1861. His preparations for the battle were poor, and he was duped by the Union commander, Irvin McDowell, who unleashed a surprise strike on the Confederate left flank. Beauregard avoided disaster only because McDowell made one mistake after another in the conduct of the battle. The South's top leadership recognized that Beauregard was incapable of independent command and sent him off to the western theater, replacing him with Joseph E. Johnston. In the west Beauregard failed to produce results and was relieved. Later in the war, however, he served with distinction in subordinate roles where he was not called on to make major independent judgments.

21. Southern Historical Society Papers, vol. 40, 172–74. Jackson's proposal, with Lee's and Davis's comments written on it, was reproduced as a manuscript in The Centennial Exhibit of the Duke University Library (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 1939).

22. Sawyer, 168. Sun Tzu admonishes the general to avoid the substantial and to attack the vacuous. Therefore, a general almost never should attack an enemy headlong. "All warfare," Sun Tzu says, "is based on deception. Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." To achieve this, Sun Tzu recommends that the successful general "march swiftly to places where he is not expected."

23. Major Thomas R. Phillips, ed., Roots of Strategy (Harrisburg, Penn.: Military Service Publishing, 1941), 407–41.

24. Liddell Hart, Strategy, 363. Liddell Hart describes this concept more fully in a 1925 book, Paris, or the Future of War.

25. Sawyer, 154.

26. Ibid., 158.

27. We know that Jackson devised this new tactical system immediately after the Seven Days battles, because Jackson's actions during the campaign against Union General John Pope were directed at getting the enemy to attack, not for the Confederates to attack. Jackson was so reticent at explaining his theories, however, that we can get only a hint of his thinking in his comment just prior to the battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862 to Heros von Borcke, a Prussian officer on the staff of cavalry chief Jeb Stuart. When Borcke wondered aloud whether

the Rebels could stop an assault by the vast Federal army arrayed in front of them, Jackson replied, “Major, my men have sometimes failed to take a position, but to defend one, never!” After the battle of Chancellorsville, in the spring of 1863, Jackson said much the same thing to his medical officer, Hunter McGuire: “We sometimes fail to drive them from position, they always fail to drive us.” The conclusion we can draw is that since Rebel soldiers could always defend attacks, the Confederates should avoid direct assaults themselves and induce the enemy to attack. See Bevin Alexander, How the South Could Have Won, 106.

28. The War of the Rebellion, vol. 19, part 1, 65.

29. Lee’s determination to attack McClellan is proved by a statement Lee made to historian William Allan on February 15, 1868, in Lexington, Virginia: “Had McClellan continued his cautious policy [of advancing] for two or three days longer [after the Confederates seized Harpers Ferry], I would have had all my troops reconcentrated on the Maryland side, stragglers up, men rested, and intended then to attack McClellan, hoping the best results from the state of my troops and those of the enemy.” See Allan, The Army of Northern Virginia in 1862, 440–41 (citation is to Da Capo Press edition); Freeman, Lee’s Lieutenants, vol. 2, 715–23.

30. Robert Lewis Dabney, Life and Campaigns of Lieut.-Gen. Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson (New York: Blalock & Company, 1866; Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle Publications, 1983), 595. See also Bevin Alexander, How the South Could Have Won, 300, note 9.

FIVE: Gettysburg, 1863

1. Lee wanted to swing around the Union army at Antietam, but he did not have the space to do so. The battle at Chancellorsville is the only other time that Lee accepted Jackson’s proposals to carry out such flank attacks. His decision was forced on him because Hooker had placed a huge force on Lee’s left, or western, flank, while threatening his right, or eastern, flank at Fredericksburg with another huge force. There was no other way (except retreat southward) to prevent these two forces from converging on the Confederate army. A strike on Hooker’s western flank emerged as a possibility when Lee’s cavalry chief, Jeb Stuart, reported that the western end of Hooker’s line was “floating in the air,” meaning it had no defensive emplacements facing west. But Jackson, not Lee, proposed the exact location of the strike, its size (Jackson’s whole corps), the resolve to roll up the Union western flank, and the aim of cutting off Union access to United States Ford.

2. The narrative on the Gettysburg campaign is largely drawn from Bevin Alexander, Lost Victories, Robert E. Lee’s Civil War, and How the South Could Have Won.

3. Edward Porter Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 230. Standing on the defensive followed a Sun Tzu maxim. “One who cannot be victorious assumes a defensive posture,” Sun Tzu writes. “In these circumstances, by assuming a defensive posture, strength will be more than adequate, whereas in offensive actions it would be inadequate.” See Sawyer, 163.

4. Sawyer, 168.

5. Ibid., 165.

6. Lee gave the reason for doing this as protecting his Cumberland Valley supply line. But by that time. he had already abandoned it, since his army found much more food by foraging in Pennsylvania than could be brought up from war-ravaged Virginia. At the same time it was unreasonable to think that Meade might abandon his position between Lee’s army and

Washington and move into the Cumberland Valley. Such a move would be directly in violation of orders from President Lincoln.

7. Sawyer, 156, 169.
8. Ibid., 164, 166.
9. Ibid., 164.
10. Sun Tzu says, “In order await the disordered; in tranquility await the clamorous. This is the way to control the mind. When near await the distant; with the rested await the fatigued; with the sated await the hungry. This is the way to control strength. Do not intercept well-ordered flags; do not attack well-regulated formations. This is the way to control changes.” See ibid., 170.
11. Johnson and Buel, vol. 3, 339. Longstreet is quoted from Edward Porter Alexander, Military Memoirs, 386-87. Freeman, R.E. Lee, vol 3, 75, citing Annals of the War, Written by Leading Participants North and South (Philadelphia: Times Publishing Co.,1879), 421, gives this quotation from Longstreet: “If he is there, it is because he is anxious that we should attack him —a reason, in my judgment, for not doing so.”
12. Johnson and Buel, vol. 3, 340.
13. Ibid., 168.
14. Abner Doubleday wrote that it was an open secret that Meade disapproved of the battleground Winfield Scott Hancock, Union left-wing commander, had selected. Meade had approved Hancock’s request to concentrate forces at Gettysburg. But he was a new commander, and he had already decided to go on the defensive along Pipe Creek, a westward-flowing stream in Maryland, some eighteen miles south of Gettysburg. A line at Pipe Creek was comparatively safe. Moving up to Gettysburg was a dangerous, uncertain move, made only at Hancock’s recommendation. Meade had not seen the site, but he did know that the Federals had been knocked off their positions to the west and had been driven out of the town. When he got there, he disapproved of the battleground because he spotted the same fatal weakness that Longstreet did: all the Confederates had to do to evict him was to move to the south. See Bevin Alexander, How the South Could Have Won, 308, note 28.
15. Sawyer, 168.
16. Johnson and Buel, vol. 3, 320–21.
17. Edward Porter Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 251.
18. On the morning of July 2, General Meade ordered General Sickles to locate his 3rd Corps down Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, “provided it is practicable to occupy it.” Meade displayed no interest in Round Top. Sickles found soggy ground between the end of Cemetery Ridge and Little Round Top and decided to move west to the Peach Orchard. In the afternoon, just before Longstreet ordered his assault, Meade sent his chief engineer, General Gouverneur K. Warren, to “the little hill off yonder”—Little Round Top—to make sure it had troops protecting it. Warren found the elevation unoccupied except for a signal station. But he saw long enemy lines on the south outflanking the Union position. All at once comprehending that the Federals had to hold Little Round Top, Warren rushed off word to Meade and began searching for troops to occupy it. See Bevin Alexander, Robert E. Lee’s Civil War, 204, 209. Warren made no effort to seize Round Top. Neither Warren nor Meade recognized its significance.
19. Sun Tzu admonishes generals to know the enemy’s plans and the terrain in advance, not to rely on learning them as one moves along. “One who does not know the plans of the feudal lords [the enemy] cannot prepare alliances beforehand. Someone unfamiliar with the mountains and forests, gorges and defiles, the shape of marshes and wetlands cannot advance the army. One who does not employ local guides cannot gain advantages of terrain.” See Sawyer, 169.

20. Harry W. Pfanz, Gettysburg: The Second Day (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 217–19.
21. Lee ordered Richard S. Ewell to strike Cemetery and Culp's hills on the north as soon as he heard Longstreet's cannons, while A. P. Hill was to engage the enemy directly on Cemetery Ridge. Ewell waited until almost dark to attack in the north. He occupied part of Culp's Hill but accomplished little. Hill did even less, but Ambrose R. Wright's Georgia brigade in Hill's corps seized the center of Cemetery Ridge during the afternoon when most Union forces had been pulled off to defend against Longstreet's attack on the south. The breakthrough could have broken the Union line, but neither Hill nor Lee exerted any effort to support Wright, and the Georgians were forced to retreat.
22. Sawyer, 162, 171.
23. Ralph D. Sawyer, Sun Tzu: The Art of War (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), 239–40.
24. Sawyer, 166.
25. Edward Porter Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 233–34.
26. Ibid., 261.

SIX: Battle of the Marne, 1914

1. Sawyer, 165.
2. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 3, 173–74; Bevin Alexander, How America Got It Right, 80.
3. The narrative on the battle of the Marne is drawn from Fuller, A Military History, vol. 3, 171–227, and The Conduct of War, 131–60; Liddell Hart, The Real War, 3–70, and Strategy, 167–79; and Walter Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff, 1657–1945 (New York: Praeger, 1953), 143–65. A number of observers have compared the Schlieffen Plan to the battle of Cannae on August 2, 216 b.c., when the Carthaginian commander Hannibal surrounded a Roman army and massacred it. Schlieffen conceived only a single flanking movement, however, not the double envelopment and closing in on the rear of the Romans that Hannibal accomplished. Schlieffen's actual plan was to repeat on a vast scale what Frederick the Great called his "oblique" method of attack—that is, he marched on one wing of the enemy while holding the other wing in place. His was actually an ancient technique. The Theban commander Epaminondas used similar tactics at the battle of Leuctra in 371 b.c. The same concept is embodied in Sun Tzu's zheng, or direct, holding force and his qi, or indirect, flanking force. Frederick's oblique force was a qi element.
4. Fuller, A Military History, vol. 3, 213–14.
5. For a detailed analysis of how linear battles were fought, see Paul Herbert, "The Battle of Cantigny," On Point: The Journal of Army History, vol. 13, no. 4 (Spring 2008), published by the Army Historical Association. The article describes the first offensive of the U.S. Army in World War I at the village of Cantigny, seventy miles north of Paris, on May 28, 1918. The 1st Infantry Division's 28th Infantry Regiment carried out the attack. It followed precisely the doctrine of linear warfare that had been worked out by the French. To seize the Cantigny plateau, the division attacked with a single regiment, its three battalions advancing abreast, each in its own zone. The American line was just beyond the village of Villers-Tournelle, and the Americans had to cross a "no man's land" of 1,500 yards to reach Cantigny. The center battalion was reinforced by twelve slow-moving French Schneider tanks that had the primary job of

clearing German troops from the village of Cantigny. The attack was preceded by a heavy bombardment by 75-millimeter guns and 155-millimeter howitzers. Then the Schneider tanks crossed the American trenches at pre-selected passages. The barrage of 75-millimeter guns shifted from the village to the line of departure for the American infantry, blasted there for three minutes, then moved forward in a "rolling barrage" that stayed ahead of the infantry, who came out of their trenches and advanced more or less abreast a fixed distance behind the shell blasts. The aim of the rolling barrage was to force the enemy to keep under cover and not be able to arrest the advance of the infantry. To everyone's surprise, the attack met spotty German resistance, and the Americans were able to capture the village. The French tanks could not enter the village because of rubble from explosions, and were soon withdrawn. The success of the attack depended on the weight of the artillery barrage on German positions, and surprise.

6. The storm troop system is explained fully by Bruce Gudmundsson in his Stormtroop Tactics (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1989).

SEVEN: German Victory in the West, 1940

1. The narrative for this chapter is drawn largely from Bevin Alexander, Inside the Nazi War Machine, and How Hitler Could Have Won, 1–35.
2. Sun Tzu says, "Attack where [the enemy] is unprepared; sally out when he does not expect you." See Griffith, 69. He also says, "Now an army may be likened to water, for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness." See ibid., 101. The most telling metaphor for this concept—"make an uproar in the east, but attack in the west"—was produced by Mao Zedong, the Chinese Communist leader who based his highly successful guerrilla warfare methods on Sun Tzu's teachings. Around 1936, Mao wrote, "Ingenious devices such as making a noise in the east while attacking in the west, appearing now in the south and now in the north, hit-and-run and night action should be constantly employed to mislead, entice, and confuse the enemy." See ibid., 51. For exposition of Sun Tzu's concepts of zheng and qi, see Sawyer, 164–65.
3. Frieser, 61.
4. Rommel, 124.
5. The two-division French "Cavalry Corps" at Hannut was comparable to a panzer corps. It contained 239 Hotchkiss tanks mounting 37-millimeter guns, and 176 Somua tanks carrying 47-millimeter guns, the best tank cannon in the world at the time. In duels, especially with the French Somuas, the Germans lost in a shocking fashion. The Somuas had 55 millimeters of armor and the Hotchkiss tanks had 45 millimeters, compared to 30 millimeters on the Panzer IIIs and IVs, the German battle tanks. Many experts considered the Somua the best battle tank at the time.
6. Guderian, 110.

EIGHT: Stalingrad, 1942

1. Manstein, 280.
2. Sawyer, 161. Sun Tzu says: “The highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy’s plans; next is to attack their alliances; next to attack their army; and the lowest is to attack their fortified cities.” Samuel B. Griffith in his essay on Sun Tzu’s Art of War, summarizes Sun Tzu’s strategic thinking as follows: “By selection of a devious and distant route he may march a thousand li without opposition and take his enemy unaware. Such a commander prizes above all freedom of action. He abhors a stable situation, and therefore attacks cities only when there is no alternative. Sieges, wasteful both of lives and time, entail abdication of the initiative.” See Griffith, 41.
3. Manstein, 283.
4. There is no evidence that Hitler, despite serving almost all of World War I on the western front, was ever aware of the storm troop or infiltration tactics developed by a German captain, Willy Martin Rohr, in 1915. Storm troop tactics were an indirect means of winning battlefield victories. The entire concept was lost on Hitler, however. This is shown in the fact that Hitler never understood the intellectual basis of Erich von Manstein’s strategy for a decoy attack on the north to draw off Allied forces in 1940, while the main attack went through the Ardennes to Sedan. Manstein’s plan was a strategic application of Captain Rohr’s battlefield method. For a full exposition of Rohr’s conception, see Bruce Gudmundsson, Stormtroop Tactics (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1989).
5. The narrative for this chapter is drawn largely from Bevin Alexander, How Hitler Could Have Won, 126–30, 145–64.
6. The Soviet Union had few other sources of oil in 1942. The oil fields of Siberia were not discovered until after the end of World War II. The only other major oil field in operation during World War II was the so-called Second Baku field between the Volga and the Ural mountains, which was discovered in 1929 but was disappointing in its production. See Heinrich Hassmann, Oil in the Soviet Union (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953). Although there were some oil wells in western Kazakhstan east of the Caspian Sea, extraction methods were technologically inferior to Western techniques and produced little oil. The vast Tengiz oil field of western Kazakhstan was not discovered until 1979.
7. Shirer, 829; Warren E. Kimball, Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War (New York: William Morrow, 1997), 84.
8. Manstein, 275–76.
9. Hitler assembled a million men in fifty-four divisions. In addition there were about 200,000 men in twenty allied divisions (six Hungarian, eight Romanian, and six Italian). The allied divisions were deficient in modern weapons and training. The main striking forces were 1,500 tanks in nine panzer and seven motorized (now designated as panzer-grenadier) divisions. Also, cannons mounted on tank chassis (self-propelled guns) were coming on line. Unlike previous campaigns, Schnellen Truppen, or fast troops, were not concentrated but were divided among the five armies (2nd, 6th, 17th, and 1st and 4th Panzer). The panzer armies had three armored and two motorized divisions apiece, but also thirteen infantry divisions between them. All the infantry divisions relied on horse-drawn wagons and the legs of the soldiers. The Soviets assembled about 1.7 million men and 3,400 tanks, 2,300 of them superior KVs and T-34s.
10. Liddell Hart, The Other Side of the Hill, 296–98.
11. Griffith, 42. Sun Tzu says, “The excellent general weighs the situation before he moves. He does not blunder aimlessly into baited traps. He is prudent, but not hesitant. He realizes that there are some roads not to be followed, some armies not to be attacked, some cities not to be

besieged, some positions not to be contested, and some commands of the sovereign not to be obeyed. He takes calculated risks, but never needless ones. When he sees an opportunity he acts swiftly and decisively." See ibid., 43.

12. F. W. von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 160.
13. Manstein, 302.
14. Ibid., 372. Manstein explains this concept fully. "A grave crisis," he writes, "could have been turned into victory!"
15. Ibid., 277, 279.

NINE: The Liberation of France, 1944

1. The narrative for this chapter is drawn from Bevin Alexander, How Hitler Could Have Won, 233–75, and Martin Blumenson's Breakout and Pursuit (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1961), The Duel for France (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), and The Battle of the Generals: The Untold Story of the Falaise Pocket—The Campaign That Should Have Won World War II (New York: William Morrow, 1993).
2. Sawyer, 162. Sun Tzu says, "One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements." This signifies that one should ascertain the enemy's capabilities and intentions to the maximum degree possible before making one's own plans. One then should accommodate one's own plans to the possible actions of the enemy.
3. By 1944, panzer and panzer-grenadier divisions were fairly close to being comparable. Panzer divisions had a few more tanks and tracked assault guns than the panzer-grenadier divisions, the latter having a few more mobile infantry, but both were formidable, fast-moving, heavily armored forces of all arms, and they were employed interchangeably in attacks.
4. Sawyer, 169. Sun Tzu says one should know the enemy's plans and the terrain in advance; one should not rely on learning them as one moves along. This makes for ill-considered decisions. "One who does not know the plans of the feudal lords [the enemy] cannot prepare alliances beforehand. Someone unfamiliar with the mountains and forests, gorges and defiles, the shape of marshes and wetlands cannot advance the army. One who does not employ local guides cannot gain advantages of terrain."
5. Ibid., 171. Sun Tzu's admonitions in this context are common sense. He writes, "There are roads that are not followed. There are armies that are not attacked. There is terrain for which one does not contend." All of these rules applied to the German armies placed in jeopardy by the Allied breakthrough on July 25, 1944. Hitler's only viable option was to withdraw the armies at once. Otherwise they risked being surrounded by Allied troops on their south moving eastward through the huge hole opened in the western front.
6. Ibid., 155.
7. Rommel, 468.
8. The Germans had built a thousand new Me-262 twin-engine, jet-propelled fighters. This aircraft had a speed (540 mph) and armament (four 30-millimeter cannons) far exceeding those of any Allied fighter. However, the pool of experienced Luftwaffe pilots had been virtually wiped out in the effort to stop the P-51s. The Luftwaffe could produce only 500 crews, most poorly trained. In addition, production of aircraft fuel fell to only 10,000 tons a month by September 1944, while the Luftwaffe's minimum requirements were 160,000 tons a month. Also Allied

airmen discovered that the jets needed excessively long runways to take off, and they began bombing these long strips. Accordingly, very few of the Me-262s ever flew against the Allies.

9. Griffith, 77.

10. A strike into Holland would encounter hard-to-cross rivers and canals, and land below sea level that could be flooded. The Brittany peninsula might be sealed off, and the French coast south of the Loire River was much too far away.

11. Manstein wrote that Hitler had an intense fear of denuding secondary fronts or subsidiary theaters "in favor of the spot where the main decision had to fall, even when a failure to do so was palpably dangerous. . . . Whenever he was confronted with a decision which he did not like taking but could not ultimately evade, Hitler would procrastinate as long as he possibly could. This happened every time it was urgently necessary for us to commit forces to battle in time to forestall an operational success of the enemy or to prevent its exploitation." See Manstein, 278.

12. One panzer division, the 21st, south of Caen, was within immediate striking distance of the beaches. The division had 150 tanks, 60 assault guns, and 300 armored troop carriers. Its commander, Edgar Feuchtinger, formed part of the division to attack British paratroops east of the Orne River near Caen on the morning of June 6, but he received countermanding orders to attack west of the river. This caused delay, and only 50 tanks and a battalion of panzer-grenadiers struck toward the British beaches about midday. The tanks finally reached the unguarded coast between Juno and Sword beaches at 8:00 p.m. Meanwhile, Feuchtinger was sending another 50 tanks to reinforce this advance when overhead he saw the largest glider-borne force in the war, 250 transports, coming to reinforce the British 6th Airborne Division a few miles east. Feuchtinger assumed incorrectly that the gliders were landing in his rear, and he recalled all his tanks. This ended the last chance the Germans had to smash the beachheads. It goes without saying that if Rommel had been in command of the 21st Panzer that day, he would not have called off the attack and would have overridden the two British beaches. At the critical moment, an indecisive German officer was in command; the result was failure. The Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, or OKW, the German armed forces command, ordered the SS Panzer Hitler Jugend Division, west of Paris, to advance on Caen during late afternoon on June 6, 1944. It did not complete its 75-mile journey until 9:30 a.m. on June 7. Friedrich Dollmann, 7th Army commander, ordered Panzer Lehr Division, near Chartres, 110 miles from the front, to drive in daylight on June 7 toward Villers-Bocage, 15 miles southwest of Caen, to block British movement in that direction. Fritz Bayerlein, Panzer Lehr commander, protested in vain. Both divisions suffered heavy damage from Allied air attacks. Panzer Lehr, the only division in Normandy at full strength, lost 5 tanks, 84 self-propelled guns and half-tracks, and 150 trucks and fuel tankers. Both Panzer Lehr and SS Hitler Jugend were unable to deliver attacks when they arrived.

13. Blumenson, The Battle of the Generals, 100.

14. Rommel opposed assassinating Hitler, and insisted that the führer be brought to trial for his crimes. After the failed bomb attack of July 20, a dragnet sought out anyone suspected of participating. One of the plotters, Carl-Heinrich von Stuelpnagel, blurted out Rommel's name after a botched suicide attempt. Another conspirator, Caesar von Hofacker, admitted under Gestapo torture that Rommel was involved. A leader of the resistance, Carl Goerdeler, wrote in several letters that Rommel was a potential supporter.

15. Sawyer, 169.

16. Blumenson, The Battle of the Generals, 163.

17. Patton tried every maneuver to get the stop order rescinded, but Bradley was adamant. At last, Patton convinced Bradley's headquarters to telephone Montgomery's headquarters on August 13 and ask directly that Patton's troops be allowed to proceed into the British zone. Montgomery's

chief of staff, Francis de Guingand, responded, “I am sorry,” and refused even to refer the matter to Montgomery for reconsideration. Bradley did not press the issue.

18. Neither Bradley nor Montgomery was much concerned with trapping the Germans in Normandy. They were losing interest in the pocket, believing the Germans were in chaos and could still be stopped before they could cross the Seine. Those few who got over the Seine, they thought, would flee back to Germany and would not be able to organize a solid defense barrier anywhere, even along the Siegfried Line or West Wall. This was dangerous overconfidence, and it turned out to be incorrect, but both officers acted on it. See Blumenson, The Battle of the Generals, 238.

19. The first V-1 flying bombs were launched against England on June 12–13, 1944. They had a range of 140 miles, a speed of 350 mph, and an 1,800-pound warhead. They were accurate only within an eight-mile radius. Of 9,200 launched against England, antiaircraft fire and fighters destroyed 4,600. The V-1s killed 7,800 people and injured 44,400. The V-1 attacks against England largely ceased when the Allies captured the Pas-de-Calais in early September 1944. The V-2 was a rocket-propelled ballistic missile with a range of 200 miles and a 2,200-pound warhead. It flew at 2,200 mph, beyond the speed of sound, and gave no warning. It was less accurate than the V-1. The first V-2s were fired on September 8, 1944, not from the Pas-de-Calais, which was being overrun by the Allies. The Germans fired 1,300 V-2s against Britain. They killed 4,100 people and injured 8,400. See Zabecki, ed., World War II in Europe, vol. 2, 1054–57.

20. Sawyer, 157. Sun Tzu says that the intelligent commander must not be interfered with by the ruler. See ibid., 162. The commander must resist political pressures of all kinds in order to accomplish the very critical purposes of war. It is fundamentally wrong for a commander to allow the “ruler” (that is, government leaders or particular national interests or desires) to influence military decisions. Eisenhower’s proper course in this situation was, not to accommodate both sides, but to decide how best to end the war and to allocate all possible resources to achieve this best choice.

21. In late November 1944, Eisenhower also halted a proposal by Lieutenant General Jacob Devers to launch an attack across the Rhine River into southern Germany by his 6th Army Group, which had invaded France on the Mediterranean coast in August and had moved up to Alsace and to the Rhine at Strasbourg. If the 6th Army Group (U.S. 7th Army and French 1st Army) had breached the Rhine, it might have come up behind the German 1st Army opposing Patton’s 3rd Army. The full story of this proposal is told by David B. Colley, Decision at Strasbourg: Ike’s Strategic Mistake to Halt the Sixth Army Group at the Rhine in 1944 (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2008). Eisenhower did not want to cross the Rhine until the bulk of the German troops west of the river had been defeated or pushed back to the east bank. Any crossings would be against the Ruhr industrial area opposite Holland. This intention was in keeping with Eisenhower’s broad-front strategy. See Colley, Decision at Strasbourg, 139.

TEN: Inchon and the Invasion of North Korea, 1950

1. The narrative of this chapter is drawn largely from Bevin Alexander, Korea, 148–373.

2. Sawyer, 154, 157. Sun Tzu says to avoid all actions not based on detailed analysis of the situation and the combat options available. Hence leaders should not allow labels, anger, hatred,

prejudice, or wishful thinking to influence their decision-making. Decisions should be based on ascertainable facts and realities.

3. Omar Bradley and Clay Blair, A General's Life: An Autobiography (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 544.
4. Sawyer, 164. This is Sun Tzu's fundamental strategic method. The orthodox is generally the main force that engages the enemy. The unorthodox is usually the smaller force that attacks the enemy at a different, usually unexpected, place, forcing the enemy to disintegrate. The various possibilities of where the unorthodox force can strike make it virtually impossible for the enemy to know in advance. In general, the orthodox force holds the enemy in place, while the unorthodox attacks his rear or flank. This is how it occurred in Korea.
5. Ibid., 161.
6. Ibid., 157.
7. The opposition of Lawton Collins, Forrest Sherman, and the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff demonstrates that high-ranking officers can be blind to strategic purposes and can miss elementary facts. This implies that nations cannot always rely on their designated experts to make intelligent decisions about warfare. In some cases, intelligent civilians have better judgment than professionals and can see strategic opportunities that are invisible to so-called experts. Collins, in his book War in Peacetime, recounts that at the August 23 conference, he questioned the ability of the forces defending the Pusan Perimeter (U.S. 8th Army) to make a quick junction with the forces landing at Inchon (10th Corps). "There was a serious question," Collins writes, "whether the 8th Army could break through the North Korean cordon along the Naktong River and drive on Inchon quickly enough before the enemy could concentrate an overwhelming force against the amphibious attackers." This sentence reveals a complete misunderstanding of what the Inchon invasion was all about. Almost all of the North Korean combat forces were in the south pressing against the Pusan Perimeter. There were no significant enemy forces to the north. Thus, where was this "overwhelming force" to come from? It didn't exist. MacArthur's strategy guaranteed that there would be no substantial forces capable of opposing the Inchon landing. Collins had failed utterly to understand this. See J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 120, 124–25. Even if the North Koreans denuded the Pusan Perimeter and sent some troops to Inchon, they would have taken days to arrive. U.S. command of the air precluded movement of enemy forces by day, thus lengthening greatly the time it would take to reach Inchon or Seoul. Actually, it made little difference whether North Korean forces moved toward Inchon or stayed and fought the 8th Army. The key was to deprive the North Koreans of their ammunition, fuel, and food, and thus render them unable to fight. Cutting the supply lines ensured that this would happen. See Bevin Alexander, Korea, 174–75.
8. The Joint Chiefs of Staff message: "After reviewing the information brought back by General Collins and Admiral Sherman we concur in making preparations and executing a turning movement by amphibious forces on the west coast of Korea either at Inchon in the event the enemy defenses in vicinity of Inchon prove ineffective or at a favorable beach south of Inchon if one can be located. We further concur in preparation, if desired by CINCFE [Commander in Chief, Far East: MacArthur], for an envelopment by amphibious forces in the vicinity of Kunsan. We understand that alternative plans are being prepared in order best to exploit the situation as it develops. We desire such information as becomes available with respect to conditions in the possible objective areas and timely information as to your intentions and plans for offensive operations." See ibid., 181.
9. Ibid., 189.
10. Bradley and Blair, A General's Life, 556.

11. Ibid., 557.
12. Sawyer, 154.
13. On July 17, Truman instructed the National Security Council (NSC) to propose what to do "after the North Korean forces have been driven back to the 38th parallel." NSC 81 was completed on September 1 and proposed that the United States seek unification of Korea through free elections by the United Nations and that the South Korean government of Syngman Rhee be recognized as the only lawful government in the country. Secretary of State Dean Acheson got an amendment that MacArthur had to clear operations north of the 38th with Truman, and American forces should not be used close to the Korean border with China, although this was not a requirement. Truman approved the paper on September 11.
14. Bevin Alexander, Korea, 231.
15. In Senate hearings on American policy in the Far East beginning in May 1951, Omar Bradley opposed an even bigger war, which MacArthur had threatened on March 24, 1951, and which would have extended to the Chinese mainland. Truman relieved MacArthur of his command on April 11, 1951, and brought him home. Bradley testified that a broader conflict with China would involve the United States "in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy." However, he and the other Joint Chiefs of Staff had done nothing to prevent the first war with China that began in late October 1950. This was also the "wrong war." See ibid., 414–17.
16. Ibid., 238–39.
17. MacArthur's statement to the Veterans of Foreign Wars read in part, "Nothing could be more fallacious than the threadbare argument by those who advocate appeasement and defeatism in the Pacific that if we defend Formosa [Taiwan] we alienate continental Asia. Those who speak thus do not understand the Orient. They do not grant that it is in the pattern of Oriental psychology to respect and follow aggressive, resolute and dynamic leadership—to quickly turn on a leadership characterized by timidity or vacillation—and they underestimate the Oriental mentality. Nothing in the last few years has so inspired the Far East as the American determination to preserve the bulwarks of our Pacific Ocean strategic position from future encroachment, for few of its people fail accurately to appraise the safeguard such determination brings to their free institutions." MacArthur's VFW message chopped at the foundations of a carefully put together administration edifice, only barely holding up, that was designed to assure world opinion that the United States had no aggressive intentions against Red China, even as it was denying the Chinese Communists access to a province that everyone, including the Nationalist Chinese, agreed was an integral part of China. See ibid., 176–78.
18. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 456.
19. Bevin Alexander, Korea, 247.
20. Sawyer, 154–55. Sun Tzu says to avoid all actions not based on detailed analysis and the combat options available within one's own capabilities. This is a part of Sun Tzu's admonition to create the opportunity for victory, which is unlikely unless adequate plans and preparations are made in advance.
21. The Chinese had little artillery and relied on small arms and mortars. They had little motorized transport and generally walked into battle, carrying on their backs what few supplies they had. Yet the Chinese army had already shown itself to be an extremely formidable force. The primary reason was that the soldiers practiced infiltration of enemy positions at night, envelopment on the sides of enemy units, and roadblocks in the enemy rear. All of these represented Sun Tzu maxims, were stunning in their effect, and in the earlier clashes had disarrayed or routed UN troops time after time.

22. In a message to the Joint Chiefs on November 7, MacArthur wrote, “It would be fatal to weaken the fundamental and basic policy of the United Nations to destroy all resisting armed forces in Korea and bring that country into a united and free nation.” He rejected out of hand a British proposal to set up a buffer zone in extreme North Korea between the Chinese and UN forces. This, he said, was equivalent to giving the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany in 1938. Rather, MacArthur urged, the United Nations should condemn Red China for defiance of its resolutions and should threaten military sanctions—presumably attacks on Chinese territory—if Chinese forces were not withdrawn. See Bevin Alexander, Korea, 293–94.

23. MacArthur had assumed a damn-the-torpedoes mentality that brooked no compromise. He informed the Joint Chiefs that occupying all of Korea provided “the best—indeed only—hope that Soviet and Chinese aggressive designs may be checked before these countries are committed to a course from which for political reasons they cannot withdraw.” So there it was. MacArthur held that the only way to keep the Chinese from entering the war was to advance to the Yalu. No better evidence of MacArthur’s divorce from reality could be offered. See ibid., 297.

24. For supply, Americans depended on their numerous trucks. When these failed because of bad or blocked roads, they called for air supply, either drops by parachute or ferrying of supplies to forward airfields. The general abundance of supply permitted Americans to be wasteful in their use of ammunition, a habit that could be disastrous when Chinese roadblocks cut off trucks and air supply was not feasible. The Chinese had to rely on human or animal transport to move supplies to forward areas. The ubiquitous A-frame wooden racks that Koreans and Chinese used to haul loads on their backs were a common mode of carriage. The Chinese, therefore, got much less resupply than the Americans, but they were not dependent on the roads. As a consequence, the Chinese could move through the mountains or on steep tracks and through roadless valleys to emerge behind UN forces to set up roadblocks and cut off or envelop forward troops. Americans, largely tied to their main supply routes (MSRs), were vulnerable to the semi-guerrilla tactics of the Chinese.

25. But the costs were very high. About 1,000 men were killed, wounded, or missing in the breakout, most of them marines. In the battles around Chosin Reservoir before the breakout, the marines suffered 2,665 casualties—383 killed or dead of wounds, 159 missing, and 2,123 wounded. The three 7th Division battalions cut off and shattered east of the reservoir lost over 2,000 men, killed, wounded, or missing, while 100 more army troops were killed or wounded in other engagements. Thus, including losses to a British marine commando unit attached and the few South Koreans, about 6,000 of the 25,000 troops in the campaign were casualties.

26. Sawyer, 154–55.

27. One of the most significant failures in American history to avoid war whenever possible and to end it as quickly as possible once it has been undertaken—one of Sun Tzu’s maxims—occurred in early July 1951. When talks to end the war in Korea were first being negotiated, the Chinese Communists proposed a complete cease-fire along the battle line. This would have ended the war at once. The talks to reach a final conclusion and a peace treaty then could have proceeded, but no more lives would have been lost. General Matthew B. Ridgway, the recently appointed Far East commander, however, refused to accept the Communist offer, and insisted that the fighting go on while the peace talks proceeded. Ridgway was afraid the Communists would build up their forces during a cease-fire and might launch an offensive. But of course the Americans could have done the same thing. The Communists were willing to take the chance. But Ridgway was not. Ridgway got the backing of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and President Truman. This American intransigence deeply soured the peace talks, which started at Kaesong and later were transferred to Panmunjom. Worse, the war went on for two more years, and

hundreds of thousands of young men on both sides were killed and maimed. It was totally unnecessary. The war could have ended in early July 1951. See Bevin Alexander, Korea, 426–32.

ELEVEN: The Abiding Wisdom of Sun Tzu

1. Sawyer, 157.
2. Ibid., 161.
3. Manstein, 372.
4. Sawyer, 164–65.
5. Ibid., 157, 162.
6. Johnson and Buel, vol. 3, 340.

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